

# U.S. Intervention in Peru

**By Heriberto Ocasio**

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Before talking about how US imperialism is truly the heart and soul of the bloody and vicious government of Peru, I have a brief greeting from my group in the US, the Committee to Support the Revolution in Peru. The message is as follows;

Victoria a la Guerra Popular en el Peru!  
Victory to the People's War in Peru!

Que viva el Presidente Gonzalo!  
Long Live President Gonzalo!

Estados Unidos saquen sus garras sangrientas fuera del Peru!  
U.S. Get your bloody claws out of Peru!

## Introduction

Our Committee recently talked to the American freelance journalist who was detained by DINCOTE (Peruvian secret police) and coincidentally was held in the same cell as democratic lawyers Alfredo Crespo and Jorge Cartegena, in January. We talked to him upon his return to the US and he told us something very interesting. He said that he had talked with US diplomatic officials who had explained that "the US was watching Fujimori very carefully" and said to him "if Fujimori makes one more mistake, he's out."

He understood it to mean that it is the US that decides if Fujimori stays or goes. That behind all the elections and the power plays and disputes among the ruling class in Peru, there stands a key force: the US.

The US plays a key role in propping up and holding together the pack of dogs that is currently running Peru. Divisions are so intense among Peru's military that if it weren't for US imperialism, there might have already been, not one, but several military coups since Fujimori's self-coup of last April. If it were not for US economic support for the Peruvian Armed Forces they would be in such a worse state of crisis than they already are. If it were not for the pressure of US imperialism, the OAS might not have sanctioned the November elections as "fair and democratic". If it were not for a whole campaign spearheaded by the US State Department, the People's War in Peru would not be slandered as it is by the so-called "human rights organizations". If it were not for the whole US intelligence apparatus, Abimael Guzmán would probably not have been captured on September 12 [1992].

## The U.S. Hand Behind the Great Crimes Against the People

They helped develop the policy of the massive round-ups in the shanty towns of Lima (called 'rastrillaja' in Spanish). It was US counter-insurgency that did the theoretical work for the policy. The hooded-judges program, whereby revolutionaries have been tried by secret military tribunals, was directly funded by a \$16 million dollar grant from the US Department of Justice, sanctioned under the cover of the "war on drugs". Also, under the 'war on drugs' cover, US Green Berets and Drug Enforcement agents have led assaults on villages in the base areas of the revolution. They have used US napalm to firebomb whole villages of the revolutionary base areas. US Drug Enforcement agents have used the deadly chemical herbicide "Spike" to poison the land and destroy crops of peasant communities in the name of coca eradication.

Every move by the Fujimori government has been closely supervised, and in many cases ordered,

by the US State Department, the Pentagon, and the US-controlled International Monetary Fund (IMF). Within a week of taking office, President Fujimori traveled to New York where he met with officials of the IMF and completely reversed his election platform of no economic austerity and plunged Peru into the most vicious economic austerity in their history. Bernard Aronson, US Undersecretary of State for Interamerican Affairs spoke to the US Congress on March 12 saying that Peru "must reform and strengthen" its legal system and gave as an example that "Today the conviction rate for accused terrorists is less than ten percent." He was in Peru meeting with Fujimori on April 5, the day Fujimori's "self-coup" suspended the Peruvian parliament and constitution, and removed 75% of Peru's judges. Aronson was again in Peru on May 2nd and had a two and a half hour meeting with Fujimori and other high level officials including Peru's Minister of Defense and Chief of Air Force. This was just 4 days before the army moved into Canto Grande prison and murdered dozens of revolutionary prisoners in cold blood.

*Newsweek* magazine reported that Antonio Vidal, head of the secret police that captured Guzmán, was trained in the US and that the secret police (DINCOTE) received training and technical assistance from the CIA, including a computerized tracking system. The Pentagon's top consultant on the revolution a counter-insurgency strategy to capture leaders of the Communist party of Peru in Lima.

After Dr. Abimael Guzmán's capture on September 12, as the Peruvian police and military intensified widespread disappearances and torture of those detained in both the countryside and the shanty-towns, a US Senate resolution heralded the capture and trial of Guzmán as a victory for democracy and called for elections to demonstrate Fujimori's good intentions. The November 22 elections were a result of an agreement between Fujimori, the US and the OAS to shore up the legitimacy of the regime. Carried out under conditions of extreme martial law and boycotted even by most of the parties of Fujimori's opposition, these elections resulted in a rubber stamp Congress for Fujimori, yet they were sanctioned by a US orchestrated Special Section of the OAS, which stated that "The OAS has determined that Fujimori has made significant progress in restoring democracy." The elections were followed by intensified attacks against the people of Peru, including further arrests of Democratic lawyers, torture and disappearances, increasingly brutal treatment of imprisoned revolutionaries, like Martha Huatay, and, in January, the arrest and summary conviction for treason of Abimael Guzmán's lawyer, Alfredo Crespo. Dr. Crespo's arrest and conviction received almost no mention in the US press.

## **There is an Imperialism Dominating Us...**

So why has the US gone to such extremes to attack the revolution in Peru, acting as godfather of such heinous crimes against the people? Are these the bad polices of an otherwise just and benevolent patron? No! Peru has been victimized, like many such nations around the world, by centuries of colonial and imperialist domination. US imperialism, in particular, is directly responsible for the immense suffering and misery of the people of Peru.

500 years ago the territory of what is now Peru fed 9 million people and produced an abundant surplus. Today, peasants in the poor zones of the Southern Highlands live on as little as 400 calories per day. Every single day 200 children in Peru die of malnutrition and other diseases of poverty.

Yet, US companies like WR Grace, the US banks like Wells Fargo, have built empires based on profits from investments in Peru. Peru is rich in minerals. In the 1950's through the 1970's, US mining companies alone invested \$284 million in Peru but returned \$790 million to the US in profits from their Peruvian operations. But when international prices for copper and iron fell in the 70's and 80's, these companies shifted their investment elsewhere and US banks demanded repayment of loans they had made in Peru for roads and other infrastructural needs of the US mining companies.

In the 1950's the US passed the Food for Peace Bill, which granted Peru and other third world countries loans to buy food. Were they interested in helping feed Peru's people? No! They needed these countries to buy their tremendous grain surplus. What effect did this have on Peru? First of all,

rather than supporting and expanding production of traditional food staples like potatoes and barley in the food production areas of Peru's agricultural highlands (where much of Peru's poor and small land owning peasants live), successive governments found it easier to import cheap wheat and other food that became available under the US programs. Peru's ruling class has also seen food imports as a way to feed a growing, potentially threatening, urban working population. For American and foreign firms in Peru, the availability of cheap food enables them to keep wages lower for their Peruvian workers.

By the 1970's, one third of Peru's food needs were met by imports. Grain imports almost tripled in this period, while domestic wheat production was discouraged and declined. These food imports were handled and processed by a few, large, agro-industrial firms. But these multi-national firms, importing and milling low cost wheat, were not concerned with feeding people in Peru. They were out to make a profit. In fact, the dramatic expansion of milling capacity between 1965-75 had very little to do with the demand for wheat for human consumption. It had to do with the rapid growth of the poultry industry, which was dominated by the North American companies, and the animal feed required for that industry. Were the people of Peru eating more chicken as a result? No! Peru's poultry industry was selling much of its product overseas.

In the 1960's and 1970's processed milk became a major item of urban consumption. The industry, controlled by the US company Carnation (as well as the Swiss-owned company Nestles), pressured and induced farmers in several areas, who had been growing corn and potatoes for their own food, to convert into commercial milk producers. They became completely dependent on Carnation for their livelihood. When international milk prices declined, many were ruined or forced to abandon their land altogether.

The imperialists argued that if they didn't invest in and trade with the oppressed nations, these countries would stay backward. Has imperialism promoted development in Peru and other third world countries? Yes! But in order to exploit them further and serve their own needs. This process stands in contradiction to the development of self-reliant and balanced national economy and the needs of a broad population. And it leads to acute crisis, and enormous suffering.

Drastic IMF-imposed austerity measures have insured that Peru continues to pay between \$60 and \$90 million dollars back to the IMF banks every single month. What this has meant to shanty town dwellers with no running water or electricity is that they can no longer afford to buy kerosene to boil their water -- that they will die because they had to drink unboiled, cholera infested, water and can't afford to pay for a hospital bed. This is what happened with Fujimori's austerity in 1990 that was followed by an epidemic where over 2,500 died of cholera.

Peru is a major fish producer, fish that could help feed the population, but instead a vast proportion of Peru's fish catch is processed into fishmeal and exported to the advanced capitalist countries. The same women who process fish in Lima's icy fish plants can't afford to feed fish to their families because it goes to feed cats in the U.S. and Europe.

When he spoke from inside a steel cage on September 24, Chairman Gonzalo put it this way. "There is an imperialism dominating us, US imperialism. This is something real and everyone knows it! Where has this led us? Here and now to the worst crisis in our entire history, a crisis the likes of which has never been endured by our people."

The People's War that is being carried out today by the workers, peasants and their allies in Peru is a powerful response, and, in fact, is the only way out of this crisis. What is coming into view is the perspective of a victorious, new democratic revolution, that for the first time will put the whole Peruvian economy in the service of the people, not profits. Only nationwide political power for the vast majority, for the oppressed, will be able to completely cancel Peru's \$21 billion foreign debt. Only then will it really break out of the imperialist stranglehold, opening the way to socialism and serve as a base for revolution worldwide.

Today, when all the world's imperialist powers boast about the death of communism, the prospect of a People's Republic of Peru is driving the imperialists up the wall. In the words of US Congressman Robert Torticelli, bitter opponent of the people's war, a victory for the revolution in Peru would be,

"a major test for the new world order". A successful revolution in Peru could have tremendous influence, not only in the surrounding countries of Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, Chile and Brazil, but around the world. This is why the US government is frantically doing everything to prop up the decaying social order in Peru. This is why the US is gearing up to escalate its military intervention.

The US has been directly intervening since the mid 80's. This escalated in a number of ways during the Bush administration in preparation for more:

In the 1987 *Military Review*, US counter-insurgency expert, John Waghelstein wrote a piece analyzing how to deal with the problem of religious and academic groups in the US opposing military intervention against revolutionary movements in Latin America. He proposes that "a melding in the American public's mind, and in Congress, of a connection between drugs and revolutionary insurgency would lead to the necessary support" for US actions. That this was the way to capture the moral high ground. This was the thinking behind Bush's Andean Initiative which funded hundreds of US "advisors" who have been sent to Peru over the last three years under the cover of fighting drugs. In fact, this Andean Initiative is building a whole infrastructure in the countries surrounding Peru. This \$2.2 billion Andean Initiative calls for an intelligence network of satellites, air reconnaissance flights and radar installations in the countries in the area.

While this infrastructure presently serves "low-intensity warfare", this infrastructure is even more important in enabling the US to launch and stage a full scale invasion of mid- or high-intensity. The doctrine of "low-intensity warfare" was developed as a response to the US defeat in Vietnam. The US hopes to use a smaller scale of force that can more flexibly be deployed in crises without getting "bogged down" like they were in Vietnam. The strategy is one of "get in and get out." It emphasizes utilizing "special forces" and training military, police and mercenaries inside the country where the war is being waged instead of massive US troop deployment. It emphasizes high-tech spying as a key component which aims to crush revolution by disrupting the organization of the insurgency.

But the US is coming to grips with the fact their "low-intensity" strategy is being defeated in Peru and they will have to get involved in a big way and be ready to take heavy losses. But how will they deal with broad sections of people in the world, and right in the US, who will oppose them, especially the viciousness with which they are preparing to assault the Peruvian people? How will they justify all this, and more if they are taking heavy losses themselves?

Their solution? Do it under a human rights cover. Paint the revolution as a violator of human rights and this will justify the crimes they commit.

In this they are counting on Human Rights and religious groups to do two things; a) attack the revolution for being the main violators of human rights and b) let the governments of Peru and the US off the hook for their violations. This has been most dramatically expressed by the refusal of Amnesty International to take any kind of serious stand in opposition to the barbarous treatment of Chairman Gonzalo. In his testimony before Congress Aronson called on "respected human rights organizations" to "focus the spotlight of world attention on the threat which Sendero poses." Amnesty unfortunately, has been following Aronson's advice to the letter.

## **Conclusion**

1. The PCP and the masses in Peru have been dealing with US intervention, continuing to advance and preparing to confront much more massive US intervention. We are confident they can defeat this and win.
2. Our Committee will do everything we can to oppose and prevent massive intervention. If we cannot prevent it, we will continue to oppose it and make them pay an immense political price for what they do.
3. We will work very hard for the day we can dance in the streets of the US together with others world wide, celebrating the victory of the People's War in Peru.