

Andean Report by Gretchen Small

Welcome, Rambos, to Peru's jungle

Peru's President Fujimori unveiled an "anti-drug" plan aiming to please the sovereignty-be-damned crew in Washington.

Alberto Fujimori's presidential adviser Hernando de Soto finally presented the government's "new" comprehensive anti-drug plan to U.S. officials on Jan. 25. The two governments had been scrapping over whether military or economic means are more useful in controlling the drug trade, with the Bush administration threatening that if Peru didn't come up with a plan to its liking soon, on March 1, Peru could be declared non-cooperative in the anti-drug fight, and cut off from all U.S. aid.

The De Soto plan resolved the debate by combining the worst economic and military policies possible: Set up free trade zones in the coca-growing areas of Peru's Amazon which U.S. special forces will police. In the military realm, the De Soto plan calls for the United States government to "feed, equip, train, outfit, and adequately remunerate the police and armed forces who will be fighting drug trafficking and those who support" the traffickers, the *New York Times* reported on Jan. 25. This elite force would carry out counterinsurgency efforts against the Shining Path terrorists (who control a good portion of the drug trade in Peru these days), blow up drug laboratories, and seize narco assets, the *New York Times* specified.

This is nothing less than an offer to place part of Peru's Armed Forces and police under direct U.S. command—and pay. And since the narco-terrorists now control or dominate an estimated one-third to one-half of Peru's national territory, to hand command of narco-terrorist strategy in Peru to the United States, is to de facto

hand control of *all* domestic military strategy to a foreign government.

It also means U.S. soldiers deploying in Peru's jungles. To carry out the program, the small number of U.S. special forces who have already been involved in jungle "training" missions for over a year, would have to be increased rapidly. This may indeed already be under way, if a report in *El Comercio* on Jan. 25 is true. According to the Lima paper's sources, when the head of the U.S. Southern Command, Gen. George Joulwan, met with President Fujimori on Jan. 24, the general told the President he plans to personally inspect the coca-growing Upper Huallaga Valley soon, in order to draw up a military plan of action.

On the political front, the core of the De Soto program appears to be copied from the Colombian government's disastrous "peace" pact with the M-19 narco-terrorists. There, the M-19, its organizational structure left intact, was invited into the government and handed vast policymaking powers, in exchange for playing politics.

In Peru, the coca-growers associations appear to be about to receive the same guarantees, and powers. According to the Lima daily *Expreso* of Jan. 25, President Fujimori sent a letter to President Bush on Jan. 22, outlining the government's plan to grant legal recognition to the coca-growers associations, and to channel all "anti-drug" programs through them.

All this is to be combined with a global free-trade agreement with the U.S., and a rural development pro-

gram based on handing out land titles to the coca-growers, and funding for unproductive "microeconomic" projects cooked up by the informal economy kooks at De Soto's Institute for Liberty and Democracy (ILD).

The package just might satisfy Washington: After all, it was drawn up by U.S. policymakers in the first place! President Fujimori handed Peru's drug policy over to the Bush administration when he named De Soto to draw up the program. Although Peruvian by birth, his allegiances certainly are not. After receiving his advanced schooling in Switzerland, De Soto established himself as a prosperous Swiss-based businessman, returning to Peru only a few years ago, in order to set up an institute to promote radical free-trade ideology. That outfit, the ILD, receives much of its funding, and a great deal of international publicity, from the U.S. government's National Endowment for Democracy.

The first thing De Soto did as drug adviser, was to hire former U.S. State Department official Anne Wroblewski and former Pentagon consultant Edward Luttwak to write the program. De Soto, who argues that the only truly productive sector is the underground economy, reserved for himself the task of drawing up the economic side of the package.

De Soto's plan feeds straight into Washington's current drive to demolish Ibero-American national military institutions, so they cannot interfere with "free trade," and has nothing whatever to do with crushing the drug trade. The drug trade, which functions as an integrated military-economic-political machine, wielding more power than any other "institution" in Peru today, will never be defeated by the "special forces" approach which obsesses Washington's adherents to the illusion of low-intensity warfare.