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# Terrorism Review

23 February 1989

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23 February 1989

### Latin America: International Terrorist Actions in 1988

International terrorist incidents in Latin America totaled 146 during 1988, up from 108 in 1987. This increase occurred primarily because of attacks in Colombia, where terrorists frequently bombed the country's multinationally owned pipeline. Peru had the next highest number of international terrorist actions in Latin America. International terrorist attacks in El Salvador increased in 1988, and Chile—traditionally the third most active venue—experienced a decrease in the number of such actions. Despite decreases in the number of international terrorist incidents in Chile and Peru, domestic terrorism continued at a high rate in both countries. Bolivia also experienced an increase in the international terrorist incidents, which included the attempted bombing of Secretary of State Shultz's motorcade in August.

US personnel and facilities were the target of about 75 percent of the international terrorist actions in Latin America. Nowhere else in the world were US targets attacked as often as they were in Latin America.

Nearly all international terrorist activity in Latin America last year was carried out by indigenous guerrilla or radical organizations. In one incident, however, a group calling itself the Palestine Command detonated a bomb at a Jewish monument in La Paz, Bolivia, to protest the US Government's denial of a visa to Yasir 'Arafat. Origins of this group remain unclear.

#### Colombia

International terrorist incidents in Colombia more than quadrupled in 1988, from 19 in 1987 to 88. A sabotage campaign carried out by the National Liberation Army (ELN) against the Cano Limon-Covenas pipeline—jointly owned by Colombia and a consortium of US and other Western oil companies—accounted for the dramatic increase in the number of incidents. The ELN was also responsible for most of

the other international terrorist activity in Colombia; it carried out 78 of the 88 international terrorist actions. Nearly all were aimed at foreign business. The group seeks to drive foreign investment out of Colombia and has caused the country more than \$300 million in damages and lost oil revenues. Pipeline bombings slowed significantly in the last six months of 1988. Only seven of the 58 bombings occurred after 1 July. A temporary shortage of explosive materials, improved security measures, and especially public criticism of the ELN for the environmental damage done by oil spillages in the countryside probably caused the group to slow its pipeline attacks and concentrate more on actions in urban areas. In September, the group detonated a remote-controlled bomb in Bogota as the limousine of the President of Texaco-Colombia passed through an intersection near the executive's home.

by the group were some kidnappings, up from one in 1987. The group kidnaped an American executive in June and held him for four months, apparently until a ransom could be negotiated. A

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Of the nine international terrorist actions carried out by the 19th of April Movement (M-19)—another leftist guerrilla group in Colombia—most appear to have been carried out to show solidarity with causes beyond the borders of Colombia. In late March, the group fired a rocket at the US Embassy in Bogota to

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protest US troop maneuvers in Central America. In mid-April, near the second anniversary of the US airstrikes in Libya, the group bombed the Colombian-US Binational Center in Medellin.

*We believe that the M-19—like groups in*  
and Costa Rica

carried out the mid-April action to mark the 1986 US airstrikes in Libya. The M-19 carried out other attacks at about the same time on three US commercial targets, a British company, and a French bank.

**Peru**

In Peru, the number of international terrorist incidents fell for the second year in a row, although the threat of such actions remained high. During 1988, there were 15 international terrorist actions, down from 41 in 1987. The sharp decline was at least partly because of the stringent security measures observed by many foreign diplomatic and business personnel operating in Peru. In addition, a number of arrests of Sendero Luminoso (SL) cell members in the capital city—including the capture of Osman Morote, a top SL leader—probably contributed to the disruption of planned terrorist operations against international targets.

International terrorist attacks by members of the Marxist-Leninist Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA)—primarily a Lima-based organization—also were down. Infighting over the future of the group and possibly some concern over the police successes in Lima may have contributed to the lull.

A slowdown of both international and domestic terrorist actions in Lima, particularly in the second half of 1988, had no effect on spiraling terrorist activities in rural areas, where the death toll from such actions increased significantly. SL carried out three of its seven attacks on international targets in rural Peru, resulting in the deaths of an American AID contract

employee in June and two French engineers in December. Since the December attack, the group reportedly has warned other foreigners in rural Peru that they, too, will be targeted for attacks if they do not leave the country—a measure no doubt aimed at further undermining Peru's faltering economy.

The smaller, pro-Cuban MRTA continued to pose a threat to international interests in Peru, although all its international terrorist actions occurred during the first half of 1988. These actions included several attacks on foreign—including US—businesses, attacks on two US-Peruvian binational centers operated by USIS, and an attack on the residence of the US Ambassador.

**El Salvador**

In El Salvador, a sharp increase in urban terrorism—particularly in the second half of 1988—pushed up the number of international terrorist incidents from two in 1987 to 13 in 1988. All the 13 attacks were against US targets. In declarations made during the fall, elements of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) stated their intention to increase terrorism—both domestic and international—in the capital. The guerrillas warned on several occasions that US personnel would also be targeted. Among the actions against US targets were a number of gunfire attacks on US Embassy vehicles, a rocket attack on the US AID offices, and another on the Sberaton Hotel. The Sberaton Hotel attack occurred just before the arrival of OAS representatives, who were meeting at the hotel in San Salvador for the organization's 18th General Assembly. These high-visibility urban terrorist actions were apparently aimed at discrediting the Salvadoran Government and focusing international attention on the US role in Central America. The guerrillas probably believe that their bargaining position in connection with their recently announced peace proposal has been strengthened by the climate of instability created in San Salvador.

**Chile**

In Chile, nine international terrorist incidents occurred in 1988—down from 15 the previous year. The

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decrease in these actions was probably the result of a deliberate slowdown of such attacks, in connection with the October 1988 presidential plebiscite. Although most of the nine international terrorist attacks were unclaimed, they were probably conducted by members of the Marxist-Leninist Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front (FPMR), Chile's most active terrorist group. The group, which splintered into two factions in 1987, divided sharply in late October when the larger "autonomous" faction decided to end a truce—observed by both factions—and declare war on the Government of Chile, according to press reports. The smaller faction, which is more closely aligned with Chile's Communist Party, reportedly denounced the "autonomous" faction and apparently is continuing to forego violence in the hope of assisting the Communists to devise a more effective political strategy for the December 1989 presidential and congressional elections. Despite the slowdown in actions in the latter part of 1988, domestic terrorism in Chile increased by a third over 1987. This increase—from 164 to 223 attacks—still falls far short of mid-1980 domestic terrorist figures. In 1985, for example, there were 850 domestic terrorist actions.

at Citibank.

In December, the assassination of a Peruvian naval attache in La Paz raised new speculation that SL activities might be spilling over into Bolivia. Although an unknown group claimed responsibility for the action, it appears that SL carried out the attack. The use of three assassins, shots to the back and head of the victim, and the calm escape on foot by the terrorists are characteristic of SL operations. The wording of the claim note and victim's reputation as a counterinsurgency expert in Peru also leave little doubt that the SL had singled out the naval attache for execution. The false claim was probably meant at least initially to confuse Bolivian security officials. Moreover, SL may not have wanted to jeopardize its "people's war" propaganda efforts, especially in Europe, by being branded terrorists.

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#### Bolivia

International terrorist incidents in Bolivia increased in 1988 to six, up from three in 1987, prompting concern among Bolivian officials that guerrilla violence may be on the rise in Bolivia. A few of these actions were among the most significant of 1988 in Latin America. In August 1988, a bomb detonated next to US Secretary of State Shultz's motorcade as it traveled from the airport outside La Paz into the capital city. Although two groups claimed responsibility for the attempted bombing—the Simon Bolivar Commando and the Pablo Zarate Wilca National Indigenous Force—the Simon Bolivar Commando, a radical faction within the Bolivian Communist Party, probably was responsible. Members of the Commando apparently carried out two previous attacks on US targets. In March 1986, a member of the Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Commando was implicated in a dynamite attack on the US Embassy in La Paz. In May 1987, the group claimed responsibility for a dynamite attack

#### Outlook

We believe the number of international terrorist actions in Latin America will decrease in 1989, based on the present levels of such activity throughout the region and the current pace of ELN pipeline bombings. Last year, between 1 January and 15 February, the ELN already had conducted 30 terrorist actions against the pipeline and other oil-related facilities. This year, there have been four during the same period. The danger to foreigners in Latin America, however, particularly US personnel, will probably remain high as radical groups try to drive out foreign assistance. Their strategy, however, may focus more on selective targeting of foreign personnel and less on facilities.

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