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Title: Taking Down the Tupac Amaru: The Best and Worst of Counterterrorism

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Many informed observers are citing the Peruvian governments operation to rescue hostages held by the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) at the Japanese Ambassadors residence in Lima, Peru as a textbook success. These observers are already holding up the operation as a standard of counterterrorism (CT) excellence rivaling the Israeli rescue at Entebbe and the German rescue in Somalia. Are these observers right?

The Facts. The facts seem to be that 71 of 72 hostages are alive and free. Two of perhaps 150 government forces did not survive the operation. All 14 hostage-takers are dead--several purportedly being killed while attempting to surrender, some or all purportedly mutilated or desecrated after being killed, and all purportedly being buried in unmarked graves without autopsy and viewing by family and loved ones. (Although the burial sites of at least some of the MRTA cadre--e.g., Nestor Cerpa--are well-known and have even been garnished with flowers and mementos by family, friends, and the sympathetic.) What to make of all of this?

On the plus side. (1) Some of the facts--all except one hostage is alive; all except two CT forces are alive. (2) Demands of the hostage-takers, especially the main one, to release about 450 of their compatriots from prisons were not met, thereby supporting the contention that terrorism does not pay. Releasing all or some of the prisoners might have reinforced a revolving-door sequence of terrorist act, government capitulation, terrorist act, and capitulation interspersed with the government incarceration of additional prisoners. This sequence would in some ways be analogous to that reinforced by the United States Reagan administration engaging Iranian-supported terrorists in Lebanon and by the post-World War II Japanese governments developing CT policy. (3) The Peruvian government has been shown to possess effective CT intelligence and operational assets--an illustration which may support the deterrence of future terrorist acts. (4) Because a majority of Peruvian respondents to polls assessing their views did not seem to support the MRTA, a case can be made that the CT operation put an end to an ongoing situation that was against the peoples will. (The counter to this opinion is that the polls were fixed, biased, or reflective of a peoples will engendered through government propaganda. (5) On a more tactical level, a reverse of the so-called Stockholm syndrome--wherein some hostages seem to strongly identify with their captors and incorporate their values--seems to have occurred. At least some of the captors seem to have at least been intrigued with the values and lifestyles of their hostages or to have been sincerely seeking educational experiences with them. This reversal syndrome merits further study by CT researchers.

On the minus side. (1) The deaths of all hostage-takers, the manner of their burial, the allegations of some being killed while trying to surrender, and the apparent mutilation of their bodies suggest that at least under the current Peruvian government, hostage-taking is a life or death proposition for all concerned. This may lead to a more lethal situation for hostages because of little flexibility among hostage-takers given the latter's expectation that they--the hostage-takers--are sure to be successful or to die. There is no middle ground. In essence, the government may be creating suicidal terrorists against which even the most sophisticated CT policymakers--e.g., those of the Israeli government--cannot be consistently successful. (2) The tactical success of the CT operation may more strongly obviate any need

on the part of the government to attack glaring social, economic, and political inequities and even the dismal conditions of prisons housing people who are not yet even convicted of crimes. (This obviation become even more pronounced with international accolades for effective CT operations.) These inequities and conditions--as well as other problems--at least partially fuel the challenges to government authority and facilitate the recruiting of insurgents, terrorists, and the like. (3) The deaths of all hostage-takers, the manner of their burial, and the accompanying allegations will facilitate the development of stories of martyrdom that are so effective in political propaganda and recruitment. For example, the deaths of all hostage-takers will facilitate martyrdom even though a strong argument can be made by CT operators that terrorists can feign surrender and may have their bodies booby trapped with explosives. As just one example, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India was assassinated by a woman booby-trapped with explosives. (Alberto Fujimori, the Peruvian president, has stated that his policy for the hostage-takers' burials is intended to decrease the probability of martyrdom. However, his other policies decisions seem to have increased this probability. To handle this possible increase, government attempts to reinforce martyrdom of the two deceased CT personnel may be in order.) (4) With stories about intelligence monitoring and communications devices being spirited into the ambassador's residence along with humanitarian assets during the hostage situation, hostage-takers may be less likely to approve the provision of humanitarian assets for hostages. No or more infrequent approval may well lead to the increased suffering of hostages and an increased probability of their succumbing to medical problems and being reasonably characterized by the so-called Stockholm syndrome. (For this last to happen, hostage-takers would need to reinforce the hostage's causal attribution that the CT authorities are responsible for inadequate humanitarian assets through past violations of trust and acts of injustice--not that the hostage-takers are responsible by creating the hostage situation.) (5) Even if completely a success in all ways, the CT operation will be closely studied by terrorists and hostage-takers around the world through advances in information technology. This study will make it less likely that the same CT techniques will be equally effective, much like the causes of some diseases building up resistances to the same therapeutic measures over time. (6) Perhaps, most importantly, CT effectiveness can reinforce the general notion that a government's only legitimacy is superior military prowess. This notion, in turn, can facilitate insurgent and terrorist recruiting, help delegitimize the government which seems to rule by the proposition that might makes right, and help explain why provoking government violence has a long history among political oppositions. Thus with CT tactical success comes a weakness intrinsic to it that must be addressed by a governments perception management activities.)

In addition, when critiqued according to commonly accepted principles of CT policy which may actually perpetuate instead of attenuate terrorism--N.B., *Some Problems with Aviation Antiterrorism and Counterterrorism Policy: A Multi-Cultural Communication Approach*, IBPP, 2(3), April 18, 1997--the Peruvian operation and its authorizers appear wanting. (1) The hostages were defined as innocent even though some were directly involved in CT policy and operations and were responsible for putting Tupac Amaru cadre in prison, for the nature of the prison environments, and for the torture and death of other cadre. (2) The terrorists were negotiated with and--allegedly--even given free passage to Cuba contingent on dropping other demands. (3) The terrorists were not held strictly accountable throughout the hostage-taking ordeal, as mentioned in (2) above. As well, supporting cadre providing international propaganda have not been held subject to CT consequences. (4) IBPP has some information from informed sources about the Peruvian development and use of terrorist profiles at least concerning Cerpa as a psychopath. Based on many newspaper accounts of Cerpas behavior during the hostage crisis--especially his being somewhat more flexible and responsive to turns of events than several other leaders within the ambassador's residence--the psychopath profile, if indeed developed, may well have been somewhat misleading. (See also *Leadership and Psychopathy*, IBPP, 1(2), November 8, 1996.) (5)

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The negative consequences of the use of physical CT assets already has been discussed in On the minus side--especially (6) above.

In conclusion, what appears to be a tactical success seems to have significant strategic weaknesses, more so than the Israeli and German operations with which the Peruvian one is being compared. Meanwhile, in Peru and all over the world the deadly game of terrorism and counterterrorism goes on. (See Baxter, V., & Margavio, A. (1996.) Assaultive violence in the U.S. post office. *Work and Occupation*, 23(3), 277-296; Monahan, J. (1996.) Violence prediction: The past twenty and the next 20 years. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 23(1), 107-120; Shenon, P. (April 27, 1997.) In Peru, a brilliant rescue shines no light on terror. *The New York Times*, p. E3; Note data for this article were obtained from informed sources within Peru.) (Keywords: Information Warfare, Perception Management, Terrorism.)