



Police snipers perched on a rooftop look toward the Japanese ambassador's compound in Lima.

# Raid On Center Stage

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Lima, Peru — Boney Garey's newspaper kiosk next to the neighborhood cafe is usually pretty quiet at 8 a.m. Yesterday morning was different.

People handed over change for newspapers displaying dramatic photos of freed hostages and inch-high headlines proclaiming the beginning of negotiations. The papers were selling faster than the 40-cent tabloids with semi-nude, fake blond Peruvians on the cover that residents normally eat up.

Lima's eyes were on the standoff between the government and the Marxist Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru guerrillas, who have said they have been holding nearly 400 hostages inside the Japanese ambassador's residence since Tuesday.

Family members have largely gone home and were glued to radios for the latest word. They were replaced on the street by international reporters and television crews, who stood poised like sharpshooters on top of nearby buildings.

"It's like a movie," said Anibal Sandoval, an elderly man who went to the scene with two friends to watch the ac-

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# Tension, Resignation Among Peruvians

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tion. The incident has brought back memories to residents of days they prefer to forget. For 15 years the country lived a nightmare of car bombs, blackouts

and massacres attributed to the Cuban-inspired group, known by its Spanish initials, MRTA, and the Maoist group Sendero Luminoso, or Shining Path.

"There were car bombs in the embassies, car bombs in the buildings," said Aida Coronado, an elderly woman working in her yard enjoying the sun.

"You'd be walking down the street, and BOOM! You wouldn't go out at night. But then President [Alberto] Fujimori came in and changed everything. He should have killed the terrorists when he had the chance."

Fujimori, elected in 1990, enacted tough anti-terrorism legislation and turned Lima into a bustling emerging market. Foreign investors are now injecting life into the economy. Middle-class families own televisions. Big Macs have arrived.

But so have problems. Peru is now a country where the military parades its tanks in front of Congress to show what it can do if members pass a law it doesn't like. A country where the president blatantly passes unconstitutional legislation. A country where the military sequesters a retired army general for speaking out against the military. A country where a business man pays an empty-stomached pauper a quarter to guard his \$40,000 car while he enjoys a \$10 drink at a plush bar. A country where little kids wash windshields and sell chocolates in the streets to support their families.

Those problems have caused some Peruvians to side with the guerrilla groups, who traditionally favor the lower class. "Peruvians think, 'So what if MRTA takes power? My life will still go on. It might even get better,'" said Guillermo Achata, 48, who said he has a friend who was a former MRTA member.

"You think life will change for the average Peruvian? The people who are afraid are those who drive \$20,000 cars and live in fancy neighborhoods, just like those people taken hostage. But the average Peruvian doesn't care what happens to them. Those people in the residence don't represent Peru. Peruvians are only concerned about having enough milk to put on the table for their children."

Even if some are indifferent to the standoff, residents can't help but ask how it will be resolved.

"Fujimori is a negotiator," Garey said, handing out the quickly diminishing papers. "It will end peacefully. Peru is used to it."



AP Photo

Peruvian police stand on guard in front of a line of journalists waiting outside ambassador's residence yesterday.

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