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EXPLORE



Attackers take over Japanese ambassador's residence in Peru

December 17, 1996

Web posted at: 10:25 p.m. EST (0325 GMT)

LIMA, Peru (CNN) -- An armed group of 15 to 20 people stormed the home of the Japanese ambassador to Peru on Tuesday night as diplomats and government officials attended a party there, witnesses and radio reports said.



As many as 40 people, reportedly including a government minister, several ambassadors and members of the Peruvian congress, were being held inside. Police were negotiating with the attackers for the captives' release.

The attackers apparently set off at least one large explosion and two minor ones.

Initial reports said rebels of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement might be responsible for the attack.



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EXPLORE

Report: Peru rejects rebels' demands to free prisoners

Fujimori: Top priority is hostage safety

December 20, 1996
Web posted at: 4:00 a.m. EST



(CNN)

In this story:

- [Hostage safety is foremost](#)
- [High tech and savvy](#)
- [Fujimori in a bind](#)
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LIMA, Peru (CNN) -- Peru's president vowed Thursday not to bow to rebel demands that he free their jailed comrades in exchange for the release of about 375 hostages.

The rebels' primary demand has been that the government free 300 members of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) who are in Peruvian prisons.



Fujimori (CNN)

But President Alberto Fujimori decided "to not accept the notion of putting in liberty any terrorist imprisoned in a Peruvian penitentiary," according to a one-page statement faxed to local news media early Friday.

According to the statement, Fujimori made the decision and his Council of Ministers approved it Thursday. There was no explanation for the delay in disclosing the decision.

The statement was Fujimori's first direct public reaction to the crisis, which

began Tuesday night when the rebels seized hundreds of hostages at a party at the lavish home of the Japanese ambassador.

Hostage safety is foremost

In a letter written to U.S. President Bill Clinton that was read late Thursday on local television, Fujimori promised that hostage safety will be his top priority, as both sides at the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima braced for a long standoff.



Four more hostages were released Thursday afternoon (Courtesy PAN TEL)

"I want to assure your excellency that I am occupying myself permanently and jointly with my team to achieve a solution as soon as possible to this crisis, the principal objective being the safeguarding of the health and life of those who are inside," Fujimori wrote.

In an attempt to end the standoff, Ecuadorian President Abdala Bucaram late Thursday said he was ready to grant asylum to the terrorists.

"We have stated clearly that if we can be of help, providing the Peruvian government asks for it, we would accede to that," Bucaram said, without elaborating on what kind of asylum he would grant.

The MRTA group Thursday afternoon freed four hostages for medical reasons, and they allowed Red Cross workers to ferry food, water and other supplies to the 375 remaining captives.

The remaining hostages are from at least 28 countries. Six are Americans, according to a diplomatic source who spoke on condition that he not be further identified.

Earlier, the terrorists released about 170 people, mostly women, including Fujimori's mother and sister.

The hostages were healthy and calm, although short of toilets and unable to bathe, Red Cross doctor Marc Cortal said.

"The hygienic situation is quite serious," Anderson said, adding that the Red Cross had been trying to get portable toilets into the building.

High tech and savvy

High-tech and savvy, the MRTA curry a Robin Hood image and aspire to emulate Che Guevarra, the Latin revolutionary and aide to Cuba's Fidel Castro.

Still, many leaders of the Tupac Amaru -- which is smaller than Peru's

Maoist Shining Path movement -- are in jail. Its chief, Victor Polay, was captured in June 1992 and is serving a life sentence. Other top commanders conceded defeat and surrendered in July 1993.

But that hasn't stopped the well-armed and generally educated insurgents from staging a series of high-profile attacks against Peru's conservative government. None, however, has been more audacious than the one this week.

The MRTA have split up the remaining hostages, including many diplomats and dignitaries, into separate rooms. The white-columned residence they occupy is hidden from street view by 10-foot walls topped with an electric fence.

The U.S. and Britain have sent advisers seasoned in hostage negotiations to Peru, but experts cautioned that a military-style assault to free the hostages would be extremely difficult.

Fujimori in a bind

Clearly, Fujimori is in a bind, facing conflicting pressures from international leaders. The U.S. advised against any concessions to the terrorists, while Japan cautioned against any risky attempt to rescue the hostages.

More than 40 Japanese businessmen and 17 Japanese diplomats remain trapped. "We are thinking first and foremost of the hostages' safety," Japan Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda said before arriving in Lima Thursday.

The terrorists have threatened to kill the hostages one by one, issuing a statement demanding the release of hundreds of their comrades, money and safe passage to the Amazonian jungle in eastern Peru.

"We are clear: the liberation of all our comrades, or we die with all the hostages," a rebel who did not give his name told a local radio station. "If the government does not give in, we will begin to execute them."

There are growing indications that Peruvian officials are preparing for a standoff. The local phone company Thursday installed public phones near the site, making it easier for police and negotiators to communicate.

The only officials meeting with the rebels Thursday were four diplomats freed the day before. "We're sort of like hostages on parole," said Ambassador Anthony Vincent of Canada, who returned to the residence to talk with MRTA leader Emilio Huertas.

It remains unclear how the terrorists entered the ambassador's residence and quickly overwhelmed guests celebrating the birthday of Japanese Emperor Akihito.

There are reports they disguised themselves as waiters, carrying champagne

and food. But some Peruvian media quoted police as saying they entered the house by blowing a hole in a wall of an adjoining house and scaling another section of a wall from a clinic parking lot.

Police Thursday held for investigation 14 of the 25 white-jacketed waiters freed by the terrorists shortly after the takeover.

Reuters contributed to this report

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EXPLORE

EXPLORE

Stalemate develops in Peru hostage crisis

December 23, 1996

Web posted at: 10:45 p.m. EST (0345 GMT)

LIMA, Peru (CNN) -- Leftist rebels gave no sign Monday of releasing some 140 remaining hostages, a day after letting 225 people leave the home of the Japanese ambassador.

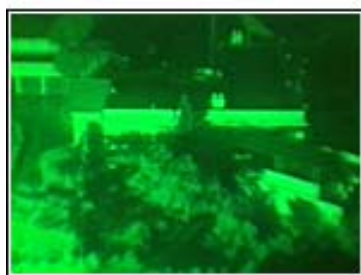


(CNN)

An apparent stalemate developed. No new messages from the rebels were spotted in the residence windows, and the government made no public response to Sunday's hostage release.

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Electricity, telephone and water services to the building remained cut, despite reports of the hardships and hygienic risks that action was creating for the hostages. About 900 police kept the residence surrounded.



(CNN)

About 20 Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) guerrillas stormed the residence last Tuesday during a reception, taking more than 500 hostages. About 170 hostages were freed early on and 38 more were released Friday.

Home video taken at the party became available Monday. It shows dignitaries socializing before it cuts to the image of a man seizing another man by the throat and holding him in a headlock.

Amateur video of rebels seizing hostages

 ([26 sec. /864K small QuickTime movie](#))

 ([26 sec. /1.8M large QuickTime movie](#))

Former hostages warned against a possible government siege, saying the rebels are heavily armed and have mined parts of the building. Among those still held is Peru's anti-terrorist chief and a brother of Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori.


Peruvian security experts say the rebels trained for months to carry out the attack.

The International Red Cross has been supplying food, water and hygienic supplies to those inside the building. The team regularly allowed to enter the residence includes a doctor and nurse. There have been no reports of hostage injuries.

The head of the Red Cross delegation has adopted the role of "neutral intermediary," taking messages between the two sides, said Red Cross spokesman [Steven Anderson](#).



(CNN)

"There are some meetings taking place," Anderson said, declining to be more specific. (23 sec. /280K [AIFF](#) or [WAV](#) sound) 

The rebels have demanded that the government set free jailed MRTA comrades before ending the siege. Fujimori has refused.

Fujimori paid a brief first visit Monday to the scene of the siege, but did not get out of his bullet-proof car.

In Japan, Emperor Akihito canceled all official birthday celebrations Monday. Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto followed developments in a special war room in the Foreign Ministry fitted out with television monitors.

Correspondent Lucia Newman and [Reuters](#) contributed to this report.

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Peru, Japan relieved by hostage rescue

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Peruvian soldiers scoured the ambassadors residence looking for booby traps Wednesday (CNN)

April 23, 1997

Web posted at: 12:17 p.m. EDT (1617 GMT)

(CNN) -- An eerie calm and a sense of relief hung over the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, Peru, on Wednesday, the morning after the stunning end to a four month hostage siege.

The compound remained sealed off and heavily guarded as Peruvian troops and firefighters scanned the area for explosives and booby-traps set by the Tupac Amaru rebels during their standoff with the government. It could be at least a couple of days before non-security personnel can get into the residence.

Japan PM, initially upset, now praises Peru

In Japan, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto -- who was caught unaware of Peru's attack to end the crisis -- thanked President Alberto Fujimori on Wednesday for taking the gamble.

"I told President Fujimori that if I had been in his position I would have done the same," Hashimoto told a news conference after speaking to the Peruvian president by telephone.

At an earlier news conference, a clearly irritated and abruptly awoken Hashimoto expressed his regret at the lack of advanced warning of the operation. Japan had been urging a peaceful end to the crisis, which began



on December 17.

The assault by Peruvian police and soldiers started at around 5:23 a.m. Japan time on Wednesday (2023 GMT Tuesday) and was covered live by Japanese television stations.

Hashimoto later said Fujimori had told him that Lima could not have given advance warning due to the "delicate situation."

"It is not important whether we had prior knowledge of the move. The important thing is that the hostages were freed," the Japanese leader said.

His praise for Peru's actions were echoed by relatives of the hostages and by Japanese who watched the raid replayed all day on television.

Morimichi Aoki, the son of freed Japanese ambassador Morihisa Aoki, said he was looking forward to having a drink with his father. "I'm relieved. I was happy to find out my father was rescued," he said.

The newly freed ambassador was also ecstatic. "I never expected President Fujimori to give me such a present on my wedding anniversary!" he said.

14 rebels, 3 others die

All 24 Japanese nationals who had been held at the residence were among the 71 hostages rescued.

All 14 rebels were killed, Fujimori said, including the group's leader, Nestor Cerpa, and at least two teen-age girls. The bodies of the rebels were being removed from the residence Wednesday morning. Two Peruvian soldiers and a hostage also were killed.

Peruvian Supreme Court Justice Carlos Giusti apparently died of a heart attack after he was shot during the daytime assault, Fujimori said. It was unclear who fired at him. A wake was being held Wednesday for Giusti.

Fujimori said 25 other captives were injured in the gunfire and explosions that rocked the compound. Two had serious injuries: Peru's foreign minister, Francisco Tudela, and another Supreme Court justice. Tudela was reported to be in good condition Wednesday with a gunshot wound to the leg.

Japan Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda was due to leave Tokyo for Lima on Wednesday evening to conduct a probe of the entire affair, reopen the Japanese embassy and hold talks with Peruvian authorities.

Rebel spokesman vows revenge

Peruvian forces struck during daylight on the 126th day of the hostage crisis, as rebel leaders kicked around a soccer ball in the reception hall of

the ambassador's residence.

In a veiled threat, rebel spokesman Isaac Velazco condemned the military action from his office in Hamburg, Germany. The "blood spilled will never be forgotten, and sooner or later, justice will be done in Peru," he said.

But the future of the tiny guerrilla band was in doubt after the raid. The group has little more than 100 fighters and most of its leaders are now either dead or in jail.

Tokyo Bureau Chief [John Lewis](#), Miami Bureau Chief [John Zarrella](#), Reporter [Harris Whitbeck](#) and [Reuters](#) contributed to this report.

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Multimedia		
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	Small version (43 sec. /1.6M)	Lou Waters brings us the first live on-air report of the ending of the hostage crisis in Lima, Peru
	Small version (43 sec. /1.4M)	Soldiers celebrate the ending of the hostage crisis
	Aiff (68 sec. /1.4M) Wav (68 sec. /1.4M)	Listen to the initial moments of the seige (at 16 bits)
	Aiff (68 sec. /768K) Wav (68 sec. /768K)	Listen to the initial moments of the seige (at 8 bits)
	Aiff (40 sec. /480K) Wav (40 sec. /480K)	Reporter Sharon Stephenson reacts to one of the explosions

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