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## CHAPTER



# FIGHTING AGAINST TERRORISM IN PERU

I was deployed in the Central Andes of Peru in January 1980; I held the rank of second lieutenant in the National Police of Peru (Policía Nacional del Perú—PNP). The strength of the National Police of Peru at that time was approximately 120,000 officers; it was one of the largest forces in South America, covering land, sea, and air territories. It included the Civil Guard, the Investigation Police, and the Republican Guard. I came to northern Peru through the cities of Chiclayo and Cajamarca in the provinces of Jaen and Cutervo. I was notified that I was going to work in a “Red Zone” where terrorism was spreading rapidly. I was not accustomed to working in this area of the Central Andes, the Peruvian Sierra.

Terrorism in Peru reemerged in 1980 and continued until the end of the 1990s with the capture of Abimael Guzman, the leader of a terrorist group known as the Shining Path. Guzman is currently incarcerated for life in a maximum-security prison. Terrorism in Peru was an armed conflict between the government and the terrorist members of the Communist Party

of Peru, who formed groups known as the Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement.

More than 70,000 people died during this Peruvian conflict. Most of these victims were civilians. Terrorism in Peru also represented a major expense for the state, which lost billions of dollars as a result of terrorist attacks to public and private property. This social conflict sparked a mass exodus of millions of Peruvians to other countries between the years 1985 and 2000; this can be compared to the migration phenomenon affecting the country of Venezuela as I write.

This conflict was bloodier than all other wars in Peru's history following the European colonization of the country. Unfortunately, this wonderful culture was affected enormously by the influence of terrorism, which caused many changes to the lives of the indigenous people. Terrorism began in the city of Ayachuco, located in the Central Andes, and it spread throughout the Peruvian territory causing instability, deaths, and desolation. The chaos is still remembered today.

Peru has a wealth of mineral resources. Gold, silver, lithium, copper, iron, lead, zinc, bismuth, phosphates, and manganese exist in great quantities of high-yield ores. Gold and silver are found extensively, as are other rare metals, and petroleum fields are located along the far north coast and the northeastern part of Amazonia. In addition to the collection marine fauna, which is considered one of the richest in the world, agriculture and livestock flourish. Peru has many natural and cultural treasures that have fascinated people for hundreds of years and still fascinate today, such as ancient ruins, high mountains, and a rain forest rich with an enormous variety of flora and fauna.



Lieutenant Salomon Soria, fighting against terrorism  
in Red Zone, Peru - October 1983

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## CHAPTER



### DEPLOYED TO TERRORIST OR EMERGENCY ZONE

In 1980, I was twenty-four years old and already married with two children. Leaving my family to fight terrorism was heartbreaking for me. One would think that I would be used to this scenario after watching my older brother leave his family time and time again. My brother also served as a lieutenant of the National Police in the rain forest and the highland areas of the Peruvian Andes three years prior to my own appointment in this region. I still remember how we all cried deeply on the day I said good-bye to my mother and my family at the Lima bus terminal.

After arriving at the subregional police command of Wankayoc, a large town in the Central Andes, I was assigned as chief of police of the district of Chonkos Altos in the Junín region. There were ten police officers under my command. At 11,300 feet above sea level, it is a laborious place to live, and home to the descendants of the ethnic Wanka people. Devoted to agriculture, raising cattle, and mining, this culture



possesses an exceptional artistic ability for pottery making and folk music.

Sudden terrorist attacks against the police premises were the most dangerous risks in working in a remote area. The terrorists' goals were to capture and execute officers, take possession of police weapons and ammunition, and weaken the morale of the personnel of the officers. The security measures that I had to take to prevent attacks had to be strict and sophisticated. I had the secret support of certain town civilians, and we met frequently to develop citizen-involved security plans and to practice shooting.

We kept close communication with civilians, taking part in civic activities and career counseling programs in schools through conferences and classes. It was very important to identify ourselves to the community and to familiarize ourselves with their projects and activities, both social and religious, in order to protect them.

At the beginning of the 1980s in the town of Chonkos Altos, five hours away from Wankayoc by bus, there was no electricity or phone service. Public transportation to the city of Wankayoc was only provided by one bus a day. It was very common for police precincts to be attacked by terrorists, and without any communication systems or electricity, it was impossible to effectively warn and protect local people without constantly changing strategies to reinforce the security of the precincts. Regional command would be informed of terrorist attacks many hours after they occurred because there were no radios or phones for establishing communication with the headquarters.

In addition to these problems, the police and the army organizations headquartered in Wankayoc were not equipped