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**Photo caption:** As part of “Operation Mercury”, Peruvian police special forces examine illegal mining equipment in Peru’s Tambopata province in April 2019. **Photo Credit:** Richard Abd, Associated Press (with permission)

## The Peruvian Armed Forces vs Environmental Crimes: An Analysis

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Latin American armed forces have a wide array of missions, from defense and security to humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) and participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations (PKOs). The COVID-19 pandemic placed armed forces in the region at the frontline as they helped implement lockdowns and transport vaccines and other life-saving equipment. However, there is one mission that, while not new,

has gained importance in recent years: environmental protection.

As the effects of climate change become more apparent and destructive, governments and general populations become more environmentally conscious. Similarly, armed forces are also heavily involved in environmental protection. In this essay, we will discuss the activities of the Peruvian armed forces – the Army (*Ejército del Perú*, EP), Air Force (*Fuerza Aérea del Perú*, FAP), and Navy (*Marina de Guerra del Perú*, MGP) – to protect the environment of the Andean and Amazonian nation.

### Structure of the Peruvian armed forces

One difference between the militaries of the United States and Latin American countries has to do with the composition of the armed services. For example, the Coast Guard and Marine Corps are independent entities in the United States. In contrast, in Peru, the Coast Guard (*Dirección General de Capitanías y Guardacostas*, DICAPI) and Marines (*Infantería de Marina*) are components of the Navy. Due to space considerations, we will utilize umbrella terms like “Navy.” However, whenever possible, we will also mention the names of specific units or agencies to provide a more comprehensive overview.

Finally, many environmental protection operations carried out by the Peruvian military are joint operations with the Peruvian Police (*Policía Nacional del Perú*, PNP) and other relevant civilian authorities. Illegal mining is a good example. We will mention these different law enforcement entities and other agencies whenever possible, but this analysis focuses on the Peruvian military.

### Environmental crimes and the Law

What types of environmental crimes occur in Peru? These include illegal mining, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, illegal logging, and wildlife trafficking. The Peruvian armed forces also clean up pollution and plant trees to reverse deforestation.

The Peruvian constitution does not explicitly mandate that the Peruvian armed forces combat environmental crimes. However, Article 171 explains that “the Armed Forces and Police participate in the economic and social development of the country, and civilian defense, according to the law.” Therefore, we can argue that combating IUU fishing protects the country’s economy. Similarly, fighting illegal mining will prevent mercury pollution and preserve Peruvian riverine life and the health of Peruvians who utilize said river waters. Furthermore, Article 165 adds that the armed forces are tasked with “guaranteeing the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity” of the country. These objectives can also be utilized to justify protecting the country’s natural environment. Even more explicitly, the Law of the Army (*Ley del Ejército del Perú*), created via Legislative Decree No. 1137 (2012), explains that the Army’s tasks include “protecting the natural environment.”<sup>1</sup>

Combating illegal mining has become a priority for the Peruvian government. In 2019, the military and police increased their presence in the Madre de Dios region, in the Peruvian Amazon, bordering Brazil, via *Plan Mercurio*. In 2021, the government approved the creation of *Plan Restauración* to expand these operations, including two provinces in neighboring

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<sup>1</sup> Ley del Ejército del Perú (Peru), Legislative Decree No. 1137, 2012 <https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/normaslegales/ley-del-ejercito-del-peru-decreto-legislativo-n-1137-876207-4/>





**Caption:** An aerial photo taking of an illegal mining camp in Puquiri River, Madre de Dios department, on February 2, 2022 shows the extent of the environmental damage caused by dredges and mining activity. **Credit:** Peruvian Office of the Specialized Prosecutor for the Environment and Dialogo Magazine.

regions: Camanti (Cuzco) and Ayapata (Puno).<sup>2</sup> More recently, in early June 2022, then-Defense Minister José Luis Gavidia Arrascue announced that the armed forces would increase joint operations, alongside the PNP, in Condorcanqui province, Amazonas region, to combat illegal logging and illegal mining.<sup>3</sup>

The Ministry of Agriculture’s Decree No. 011/2017 created a strategy to combat wildlife trafficking for

2017-2027.<sup>4</sup> The text, including Article 3.3, mentions the Ministry of Defense and armed forces (particularly the MGP) as actors that have a role in combating this particular crime.

In other words, military environmental protection operations in Peru do not occur in a legal vacuum; several plans and strategies, and the constitution itself, authorize these types of missions.

### Peru: Recent Operations – Illegal Mining

Since illegal mining is a significant concern for Lima, our analysis will begin with that particular crime. Due to *Plan Mercurio/Plan Restauración*, the armed forces are active in Madre de Dios. In October 2020, an operation between the three armed services and law

<sup>2</sup> “Plan Integral Frente a la Minería ilegal: Para el departamento de Madre de Dios y los distritos de Camanti, provincia de Quispicanchi en el departamento de Cuzco y el distrito de Ayapata, provincia de Carabaya, en el departamento de Puno,” Ministerial Resolution No.083/2021-PCM <https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/2037149/ANEXO%20DS.%200017-2021-MINAM%20-%20PLAN%20INTEGRAL%20FRENTE%20A%20LA%20MINERIA%20ILEGAL%20PLAN%20RESTAURACION%20%282%29.pdf.pdf>. Also, see: “Minería ilegal: aprueban Plan Restauración en Madre de Dios y distritos de Cusco y Puno,” Andina News Agency, 25 July 2021 <https://andina.pe/agencia/noticia-mineria-ilegal-aprueban-plan-restauracion-madre-dios-y-distritos-cusco-y-puno-854803.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> “Ministro de Defensa anuncia el fortalecimiento de la lucha contra la minería ilegal en Condorcanqui,” Ministry of Defense (Peru), Press Release 2 June 2022 <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/mindef/noticias/615696-ministro-de-defensa-anuncia-el-fortalecimiento-de-la-lucha-contra-la-mineria-ilegal-en-condorcanqui>

<sup>4</sup> “Decreto Supremo que aprueba la “Estrategia Nacional para Reducir el Tráfico Ilegal de Fauna Silvestre en el Perú, periodo 2017 - 2027 y su Plan de Acción 2017 – 2022” Decree No.011/2017-MINAGRI Ministério de Agricultura (Peru) <https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/normaslegales/decreto-supremo-que-aprueba-la-estrategia-nacional-para-red-decreto-supremo-n-011-2017-minagri-1553973-1/>

enforcement agencies in Inambari River destroyed “one clandestine camp and 16 dredgers.”<sup>5</sup> More recently, in January, May, and June 2022, operations have occurred via the Operational Command South (*Comando Operacional del Sur*, COS) and the PNP in La Pampa.<sup>6</sup> In July, the Army’s 6<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Brigade, operating out of Army base Pachacutec, located and destroyed four illegal mining camps in La Cantonera and La Pampa areas in a joint operation with the PNP.<sup>7</sup> The COS, DICAPI, PNP, and civilian authorities operate in Madre de Dios provinces such as Maynas and Manu.<sup>8</sup> The MGP also carried out several operations along the Madre de Dios River, Madre de Dios region, in July and August 2021.

Illegal mining is a nationwide problem. The Army’s 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade for Jungle Operations and PNP personnel operate in the Cenepa district and Condorcanqui province, Amazonas region.<sup>9</sup> The Navy also cracked down on illegal mining along the Nanay River on 24-26 February. As a result, ten artisanal crafts were

seized.<sup>10</sup>

Aerial surveillance is very helpful to combat this crime. Between 7-9 August 2018, the FAP led a massive aerial surveillance operation across Madre de Dios.<sup>11</sup> Unmanned aerial vehicles, utilized by FAP and even by civilian associations, and one Fairchild C-26 *Metroliner* aircraft were employed. The result was over 20 thousand images of Madre de Dios provinces, particularly Manu and Tambopata. The photos were shared with other Peruvian government agencies to understand environmental crimes in this region better. The author of this analysis has learned that the data gathered by FAP was utilized to draft *Plan Mercurio and Plan Restauración*, as the images demonstrated the gravity of the situation.

To combat illegal mining, a beneficial project is FAP’s National Amazonian Surveillance System (*Sistema de Vigilancia Amazónico Nacional*, SIVAN). SIVAN aims to collect information via radars, satellites, and aerial platforms to “protect the Peruvian Amazon, combat illegal mining, illegal logging, wildfires,” among other missions.<sup>12</sup> However, while SIVAN has existed on paper for several years, the FAP still needs to acquire aerial and ground-based platforms for the system to become operational.

### IUU fishing in Peru

Illegal fishing occurs at three levels in Peru. First, it occurs on a local level, normally by small artisanal Peruvian craft operating without authorization in Peruvian waters. Second, it happens regionally when

<sup>5</sup> “Fuerzas del Orden destruyen campamento y maquinaria de la minería ilegal en Madre de Dios,” Ministry of Defense (Peru) 25 October, 2020 <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/mindef/noticias/310215-fuerzas-del-orden-destruyen-campamento-y-maquinaria-de-la-mineria-ilegal-en-madre-de-dios>

<sup>6</sup> “Fuerzas del Orden destruyen seis campamentos con material utilizado en la minería ilegal,” Ministry of Defense (Peru) 27 January 2022 <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/ccffaa/noticias/579718-fuerzas-del-orden-destruyen-seis-campamentos-con-material-utilizado-en-la-mineria-ilegal>; Tweet, Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (Peru) 18 May 2022 [https://twitter.com/CCFFAA\\_PERU/status/1527012838384013312](https://twitter.com/CCFFAA_PERU/status/1527012838384013312). Also see Tweet, Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (Peru) 23 May 2022 [https://twitter.com/CCFFAA\\_PERU/status/1528867540578865152](https://twitter.com/CCFFAA_PERU/status/1528867540578865152). Also see: Tweet, Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (Peru), 11 June 2022. [https://twitter.com/CCFFAA\\_PERU/status/1535759122729083023](https://twitter.com/CCFFAA_PERU/status/1535759122729083023). Also see: Tweet, Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (Peru), 8 June 2022, [https://twitter.com/CCFFAA\\_PERU/status/1534634127781150721](https://twitter.com/CCFFAA_PERU/status/1534634127781150721)

<sup>7</sup> Tweet, Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (Peru), 1 August 2022. [https://twitter.com/CCFFAA\\_PERU/status/1554251740077121536?t=OfSSFY1z0FYI6rfOXXZKA&s=08](https://twitter.com/CCFFAA_PERU/status/1554251740077121536?t=OfSSFY1z0FYI6rfOXXZKA&s=08)

<sup>8</sup> Tweet, Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (Peru) 17 June 2022. [https://twitter.com/CCFFAA\\_PERU/status/1537971920993259520](https://twitter.com/CCFFAA_PERU/status/1537971920993259520) Also see: Tweet, Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (Peru) 12 July 2022 [https://twitter.com/CCFFAA\\_PERU/status/1546910554836566017](https://twitter.com/CCFFAA_PERU/status/1546910554836566017)

<sup>9</sup> Tweet, Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (Peru), 6 August 2022 [https://twitter.com/CCFFAA\\_PERU/status/1555914779696500742](https://twitter.com/CCFFAA_PERU/status/1555914779696500742) and Tweet, Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (Peru), 4 August 2022 [https://twitter.com/CCFFAA\\_PERU/status/1555296891004502023](https://twitter.com/CCFFAA_PERU/status/1555296891004502023) Also see: Tweet, Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (Peru), 20 July 2022 [https://twitter.com/CCFFAA\\_PERU/status/1549796927256104960](https://twitter.com/CCFFAA_PERU/status/1549796927256104960)

<sup>10</sup> “Operativo contra la minería ilegal en el río Nanay,” Marina de Guerra (Peru), 2 March 2022. <https://www.marina.mil.pe/en/noticia/operativo-contra-la-mineria-ilegal-en-el-rio-nanay>

<sup>11</sup> Durand, Fernando “Loreto: Destruyen nueve dragas artesanales en la cuenca del río Nanay,” Infoferion, 4 Marzo 2022 <https://www.inforegion.pe/293487/loreto-destruyen-nueve-dragas-artesanales-en-la-cuenca-del-rio-nanay/>

<sup>12</sup> Fuerza Aerea (Peru), Facebook Page, 15 June 2021 <https://www.facebook.com/fap.mil.pe/posts/4184389014941486>





**Caption:** Representatives from The Peruvian Ministry of the Environment and the Peruvian Navy meet to examine maritime environmental protection efforts.  
**Credit:** Government of Peru.

vessels from neighboring countries enter Peruvian waters and operate without authorization. Last, it also occurs extra-regionally when international fishing fleets, particularly Chinese fishing vessels, operate in Peru's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Extra-regional fishing fleets are the most damaging as they operate in a high-intensity, predatory manner.

The Peruvian Navy and Air Force are heavily involved in locating, monitoring, and, if necessary, intercepting these vessels. Combating IUU fishing is a year-round problem, just like other environmental crimes. In recent years, the MGP has carried out successful operations in Tumbes via coastal patrol vessel *Chilca* (PP-619)<sup>13</sup> and in Arequipa. In May 2022, two Ecuadorian fishing vessels, *Arca de Noe* and *Ariacny*, were intercepted in Northern Peru for fishing without authorization. The operation was carried out by platforms assigned to DICAPI Puerto Zorritos (*Capitanía*

*de Puerto de Zorritos*, CAPIZORI) in Tumbes region, alongside the Ministry of Production.<sup>14</sup>

The Navy routinely monitors the international fishing fleets that cross and operate in Peruvian waters.<sup>15</sup> In 2020, for example, a Beechcraft Super King Air 200 surveillance aircraft assigned to the MGP's Naval Aviation monitored a fleet sailing close to Peruvian waters.<sup>16</sup>

### Illegal Logging

The Peruvian Army is also involved in combating il-

<sup>13</sup> "Exitoso operativo contra la pesca ilegal en Tumbes" Marina de Guerra (Peru) 19 June 2020 <https://marina.mil.pe/es/noticia/exitoso-operativo-contra-la-pesca-ilegal-en-tumbes/>

<sup>14</sup> "Peru intercepta embarcaciones ecuatorianas realizando pesa ilegal en aguas peruanas" Industrias Pesqueras, Política de Pesca, 2 March 2022 [https://industriaspesqueras.com/noticia-69766-seccion-Pol%C3%ADtica\\_de\\_Pesca](https://industriaspesqueras.com/noticia-69766-seccion-Pol%C3%ADtica_de_Pesca)

<sup>15</sup> "Operativo integrado contra la pesca ilegal en la provincia de Islay," DICAPI, 12 March, 2022 <https://www.dicapi.mil.pe/noticias/operativo-integrado-contra-la-pesca-ilegal-en-la-provincia-de-islay>

<sup>16</sup> Jugo Rebaza, Juan Miguel, "Marina de Guerra: flota pesquera mayormente china está vigilada constantemente," *Gestión* (Peru) 23 September 2020 <https://gestion.pe/peru/marina-de-guerra-flota-de-embarcaciones-mayoritariamente-chinas-estan-constantemente-vigiladas-noticia/>



**Caption:** Lumber from Peruvian trees – part of the deforestation problem in Peru – are transported down the 1,000-mile long Ucayali River.

**Credit:** U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman

legal logging across the region.<sup>17</sup> Several seizures of illegal logging were seized during law enforcement operations and donated to the Peruvian Army’s III division, based in Arequipa, to modernize its facilities.<sup>18</sup> According to Law 29763, the Law for Forestry and Wildlife (*Ley Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre*), Peru’s national forestry and wildlife service (*Servicio Nacional Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre*, SERFOR) can transfer seized goods, such as wood, to entities that will utilize them for “educational, cultural, social” objectives. Therefore, the wood transferred to the Army will be used to improve the service’s center for social services for family members (*Centro de Atención al Adulto y Familia*).

The MGP has also combated wildlife trafficking by

<sup>17</sup> “SERFOR, Fiscalía y Ejército Peruano iniciaron operativos contra el tráfico ilegal de madera en el VRAEM,” Ministry of Agriculture (Peru), 5 May 2016 <https://www.serfor.gob.pe/portal/noticias/negocios-sostenibles/serfor-fiscalia-y-ejercito-peruano-iniciaron-operativos-contra-el-trafico-ilegal-de-madera-en-el-vraem>

<sup>18</sup> “Arequipa: SERFOR entregó al gobierno regional y ejército peruano madera procedente del tráfico ilegal” Servicio Nacional de Forestación y de Fauna Silvestre, Press Release 7 July 2022 <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/serfor/noticias/629895-arequipa-serfor-entrego-al-gobierno-regional-y-ejercito-peruano-madera-procedente-del-trafico-ilegal>

intercepting vessels attempting to smuggle animals. An operation against this crime took place by personnel assigned to Pucallpa port (*Capitanía de Puerto de Pucallpa*), alongside the PNP and civilian agencies, in 2020.<sup>19</sup>

### Fighting Pollution

As for reforestation and combating pollution, the armed services are also very active. For example, at the beginning of 2022, there was a crisis across the Peruvian coast when, on 15 January, the ship *Mare Doricum*, flying an Italian flag but operated by the Spanish energy company Repsol, spilled oil in the Ventanilla district, Callao. As part of the clean-up response, various military units were deployed, including 500 personnel from the marine infantry and the coast guard. The EP deployed the Multipurpose Brigade, a Mili-

<sup>19</sup> “Operativo multisectorial contra el tráfico ilegal de fauna silvestre en Contamana” Dirección General de Capitanías y Guardacostas del Perú, Facebook page, 19 December 2020 <https://www.facebook.com/MGP.Oficial/posts/d41d8cd9/3524564854259903/>





**Caption:** Members of the First Multipurpose Brigade of the Peruvian armed forces, dressed in protective clothing, prepare to clean up an oil spill in Ventanilla, just north of the capital of Lima in January 2022. **Credit:** Peruvian government

tary Police Battalion, the Rapid Intervention for Disasters Battalion, and the Nuclear, Biological, Chemical, and Radiological Company (*Compañía Nuclear, Biológica, Química, y Radiológica*).<sup>20</sup> Previously, in 2021 troops assigned to the Army's Mechanized Infantry Battalion (*Batallón de Infantería Mecanizada*, BIMEC) helped clean a beach in Chorrillos municipality, Huacho.<sup>21</sup>

Reforestation operations occurred in the San Martín region thanks to the Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Forces Brigade. In 2019, Army personnel also assisted the Ministry of Agriculture in the Pucara district, Huancayo region, in digging holes, where trees were planted

across 20 hectares of land.<sup>22</sup>

### Analysis

Several issues can be analyzed about the Peruvian military's role in combating environmental crimes. Regarding the Peruvian military's environmental protection efforts, helicopters are vital for Army (and Police) operations to combat illegal mining across the Amazon. While the MGP, including the marines, operate their riverine craft, helicopters are ideal for quick insertions to surprise criminals. Similarly, for the Navy, rotary-wing platforms aboard vessels are beneficial to cover more sea faster and locate fishing vessels.

The usage of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) to locate illegal mining and logging camps is noteworthy.

<sup>20</sup> "Marina de Guerra moviliza a 500 efectivos para apoyar en limpieza de playas afectadas por derrame," Ministry of Defense (Peru) Press Release, 25 January 2022 <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/mindef/noticias/579091-marina-de-guerra-moviliza-a-500-efectivos-para-apoyar-en-limpieza-de-playas-afectadas-por-derrame>

<sup>21</sup> "Ejército Peruano realiza jornada de limpieza en playa Chorrillos, con apoyo de municipalidad provincial," Huaura Provincial Municipality (Peru) 26 April 2021 <http://www.munihuacho.gob.pe/portalweb/index.php/item/7824-ejercito-peruano-realiza-jornada-de-limpieza-en-playa-chorrillos-con-apoyo-de-la-municipalidad-provincial>

<sup>22</sup> "Junín: personal del ejército participa en actividad de reforestación del Minagri con la apertura de hoyos," Ministry of Agriculture (Peru), Press Release, 21 February 2019 <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/agrorural/noticias/524814-junin-personal-del-ejercito-participa-en-actividad-de-reforestacion-del-minagri-con-la-apertura-de-hoyos>

The 2018 FAP operation in Madre de Dios heavily relied on these platforms, even from civilian agencies. The EP also utilizes UAVs. As illegal miners leave La Pampa for other areas where the Peruvian military and PNP do not operate, UAVs will be critical to locate these new camps. UAVs' effectiveness in combating environmental crimes should encourage the Ministry of Defense and other state institutions to purchase or promote the local production of these platforms for the armed forces.

The Peruvian military has units such as the multipurpose brigade, the Rapid Intervention for Disasters Battalion, and the Nuclear, Biological, Chemical, and Radiological Company. These units can be deployed for humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations (HA/DR), including oil spills, as happened in January 2022. In a Regional Insights for the Perry Center titled "The 21st Century Latin American Military: Climate Change and the Future of HA/DR Operations,"<sup>23</sup> the author of this analysis discussed the possibility that Latin American militaries could create more units trained explicitly for HA/DR operations. Could the Peruvian Army benefit from having another multipurpose brigade, for example? Or a battalion specifically trained for illegal mining and logging operations? While there are obvious strategic, personnel, and budgetary challenges with creating new units or re-structuring existing ones, the success of the multipurpose brigade and growing environment-related security challenges suggests that new units are necessary.

### Environmental crimes in Peru

The Peruvian military's success in La Pampa, Madre

de Dios region, has caused illegal miners to migrate to other areas where they can operate freely. This is problematic as the armed forces and police now need to expand their area of responsibility to locate these new camps.

Crimes such as illegal mining are complex, as an entire sub-economy revolves around them. For example, reliable sources that know the illicit mining problem in Peru explained to the author how there are bars, small stores, and prostitutes (including women from Venezuela) around the unlawful mining areas so that the workers can easily spend their cash payments. Local residents can also make a living repairing equipment used by the miners. Identifying the funders of illegal mining operations, which procure the costly equipment (e.g., Caterpillar machinery), adds another layer of complexity to this crime.<sup>24</sup>

The author understands from reliable sources in Peru that there is a connection between illegal miners and illegal loggers, as unlawful miners often cut down trees to set up their equipment. In addition, the author has learned that sometimes individuals come for the fallen tree trunks to commercialize them. Additional analysis is needed to understand this link.

The Peruvian armed forces are engaged in fighting drug traffickers and the narco-insurgent movement, Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*), which is heavily fragmented. One faction is the Militarized Communist Party of Peru (*Militarizado Partido Comunista del Perú*, MPCP) which operates in the Valley of the Apurimac, Ene, and Mantaro Rivers (*Valle de los Ríos Apurímac, Ene y Mantaro*, VRAEM). Peru's narco-insurgent MPCP profits from cocaine production. However, it is plausible that other criminal enter-

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<sup>23</sup> Sánchez, Wilder Alejandro "The 21st Century Latin American Military: Climate Change and the Future of HA/DR Operations," Regional Insights, William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, National Defense University, April 2022 <https://www.williamjerrycenter.org/content/21st-century-latin-american-military-climate-change-and-future-hadr-operations>

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<sup>24</sup> Caparini, Marina (Dr.), "Organized environmental crime: Why it matters for peace operations," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 12 May 2022 <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2022/organized-environmental-crime-why-it-matters-peace-operations>





**Caption:** The Valley of the Apurimac, Ene, and Mantaro Rivers (marked by red highlighted area), a lengthy section of the Peruvian Cordillera marked by deep valleys, rivers, limited government presence, and minimal development, has long been associated with illegal activities.

**Credit:** Google Maps rendition created by WJPC staff.

prises in the Andean country are engaged in multiple crimes, including environmental ones. Future insurgent movements could also potentially seek to engage in drug trafficking and environmentally destructive crimes like illegal mining or wildlife trafficking. This situation has already happened in Colombia, where ELN and former FARC guerrillas profit from the ever-lucrative drug trafficking, illegal mining, and the theft of hydrocarbons.

### **A military understanding of environmental crimes**

We have discussed the Peruvian armed forces' opera-

tions to combat environmental crimes. The other side of the coin is to study these types of crimes to understand why environmental crimes should be a priority for a country's national defense strategy and to put forward new ideas and strategies to improve military efficiency to combat environmental crimes.

The good news is that Latin American militaries understand the importance of environmental protection and are writing about it. Case in point, in 2022, Colombia's War College (*Escuela Superior de Guerra*) published a book that discussed how the country's internal conflict influenced crimes like deforestation,

illegal mining, and the destruction of oil pipelines.<sup>25</sup> Civilian agencies in Colombia have also drafted pamphlets to educate Colombian military personnel vis-a-vis environmental crimes.<sup>26</sup> Environmental crimes are also researched by international organizations.<sup>27</sup>

As for Peru, the Army has a think tank called the Center of Strategic Studies of the Peruvian Army (*Centro de Estudios Estratégicos del Ejército del Perú*, CEEEP). CEEEP is tasked with drafting “strategic analyses and research related to the security and defense of the country that contribute to the decision making and solution of problems related to the Army, Defense sector, country, and the region.”<sup>28</sup> CEEEP has already published at least one commentary about environmental crimes, specifically about the government’s role in the aforementioned La Pampa province, Madre de Dios.<sup>29</sup>

As for other relevant publications, a 2016 Master’s thesis released online by the EP’s war college (*Escuela Superior de Guerra del Ejército*, ESGE) focuses on the reforestation operations carried out in Madre de Dios by Army unit No. 4 *Iberia* (*Unidad*

*de Asentamiento Rural Iberia* No.4).<sup>30</sup> A similar thesis, released by the military center for higher educational studies (*Centro de Altos Estudios Nacionales*, CAEN) addressed military operations to combat environmental crimes along the Peru-Ecuador border.<sup>31</sup> It goes without saying that additional scholarly analyses should be encouraged by ESGE, CAEN, CEEEP, and other relevant think tanks and educational centers. The Peruvian military’s grand strategy toward environmental crimes and protection has yet to be written.

### Looking Forward

How will Latin American armed forces, including Peruvian military personnel, combat environmental crimes in the future, and what do future strategies mean for defense acquisition programs, the training of personnel, and the composition of the services? For example, will there be one day a center to train personnel to combat environmental crimes? The idea is not unthinkable, as Peru already has a peacekeeping training center (*Centro de Entrenamiento y Capacitación para Operaciones de Paz*, CECOPAZ-Peru). Alternatively, military educational institutions like CAEN, ESGE, or CEEEP can create departments that focus on climate change, environmental protection, and the role of the armed forces.

As for the aforementioned idea about creating a unit tasked explicitly with environmental protection, the idea is not unimaginable. For example, the Bolivian Army has an environmental regiment, *Cacique Juan*

<sup>25</sup> “Publicación del libro: Seguridad humana y crímenes ambientales,” Escuela Superior de Guerra (Colombia) 28 April 2022 <https://esdegue.edu.co/es/publicacion-del-libro-seguridad-humana-y-crimenes-ambientales>. *Seguridad Ambiental y Crímenes Ambientales*, Escuela Superior de Guerra (Colombia)/Planeta, 2022 [https://www.tornamesa.co/libro/seguridad-humana-y-crimenes-ambientales\\_99021](https://www.tornamesa.co/libro/seguridad-humana-y-crimenes-ambientales_99021) Also see: Garzon, Juan Carlos & Tobo, Paula, “Fuerzas Militares y la protección del ambiente: Roles, riesgos y oportunidades,” Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 17 September 2020 <https://ideaspaz.org/publicaciones/investigaciones-analisis/2020-09/fuerzas-militares-y-la-proteccion-del-ambiente-roles-riesgos-y-oportunidades>

<sup>26</sup> “Cormacarena crea guía a Fuerzas Militares para procedimiento ante delitos ambientales,” CORMACARENA, 8 September 2021 <https://www.cormacarena.gov.co/guia-fuerzas-militares-ante-delitos-ambientales/>

<sup>27</sup> Abdeneur Adriana Erthal; Pellegrino, Ana Paula; Porto, Carol Viviana; Brasil, Lycia, “Los Delitos Ambientales en la Cuenca del Amazonas,” El PacCTO, April 2019 <https://www.elpaccto.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Los-Delitos-Ambientales-en-la-Cuenca-del-Amazonas-comprimido.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> “Welcome” Centro de Estudios Estratégicos del Ejército del Perú <https://cecep.mil.pe/bienvenida/>

<sup>29</sup> Villagra, Manolo Eduardo “Intervención del Estado peruano en La Pampa: Un esfuerzo integral pendiente,” Centro de Estudios Estratégicos del Ejército del Perú, 18 May, 2021 <https://cecep.mil.pe/2021/05/18/intervencion-del-estado-peruano-en-la-pampa-un-esfuerzo-integral-pendiente/>

<sup>30</sup> Chavez Yomona, Robert; Dam Vidal, Denis; Castillo Gamboa, Manuel Antonio, “Nuevo misionamiento de la unidad militar de asentamiento rural ‘Iberia’ No. 4 y reforestación de la Amazonia en la Región de Madre de Dios,” Master’s Thesis, Post-Graduate School, Army War College (Escuela Superior de Guerra del Ejército), December 2016 [https://alicia.concytec.gob.pe/vufind/Record/ESGE\\_1c4b61011f15297580c339bc60e6dfe2](https://alicia.concytec.gob.pe/vufind/Record/ESGE_1c4b61011f15297580c339bc60e6dfe2)

<sup>31</sup> Rugel Oyola, Ana Franzua, “Participación de las Fuerzas Armadas en la seguridad ambiental. Caso Perú – Ecuador 2018-2019,” Centro de Altos Estudios Nacionales (Peru) 2022 <https://renati.sunedu.gob.pe/bitstream/sunedu/1593743/1/TEISIS%20PARA%20OPTAR%20AL%20GRADO%20ACAD%3%89MICO%20DE%20DOCTOR%20EN%20DESARROLLO%20Y%20SEGURIDAD%20ESTRAT%3%89GICA.pdf>





**Caption:** The extensive environmental damage is apparent in this photo of an illegal mining camp. **Credit:** Dialogo magazine

*Maraza (Regimiento Ecológico Escuela de Protección de Parques Nacionales Cacique Juan Maraza).*<sup>32</sup> While the Bolivian regiment's composition and objectives are slightly more complex than solely environmental protection, this unit serves as a good model that Peru and other countries can utilize for the potential creation of units with similar objectives.

As a final issue, we should mention calls for environmental destruction to be considered a "war crime." There are already proposals to draft a fifth Geneva Convention to protect the environment during armed

conflicts.<sup>33</sup> While these proposals remain somewhat generic, they demonstrate the growing international awareness regarding environmental protection, both as a crime and during times of war.

### Conclusions

The Peruvian armed forces have a wide array of tasks, from defending the country from a potential external threat to combating the narco-insurgent movement Shining Path, including the dissident MPCP faction. HA/DR operations are a never-ending task, which will become more demanding and arduous due to the effects of climate change; the Peruvian ministry of defense and military leadership is aware of this situation, thus the Army's multipurpose brigade. The

<sup>32</sup> "Regimiento 'Juan Maraza' se afianza," Ministry of Defense (Bolivia), 19 May 2014 <https://www.mindef.gob.bo/mindef/node/1451> Also see: Twitter, Army Account (Bolivia), 1 September, 2022 <https://twitter.com/BoliviaEjercito/status/1565462981659414529?t=a8t2UQuXLbl4gPRcYtq4A&s=08> . Also see: "Regimiento ecológico "Cacique Juan Maraza" es creado para proteger Parques Nacionales" *EABolivia.com* 29 August 20212 <https://www.eabolivia.com/politica/15362-regimiento-ecologico-qcacique-juan-marazaq-es-creado-para-proteger-parques-nacionales.html>

<sup>33</sup> Daft, Shireen "Environmental Destruction is (Already) a War Crime, but is almost Impossible to Commit," *JusticeInfo.net*, International, 4 December 2019 <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/43121-environmental-destruction-war-crime-impossible-to-commit.html> Also see: Leebaw, Bronwyn, "Scorched Earth: Environmental War Crimes and International Justice," *Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 14, 2014: 770-788 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43280032>

country has been a constant contributor to UN peace operations for decades, with a critical deployment of blue helmets to the UN mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) today.

As for environmental crimes, IUU fishing is a long-standing problem for Peru, with the Navy and Air Force doing what they can with their available platforms to patrol Peruvian waters, mainly to ensure that international fishing fleets do not engage in predatory fishing. Illegal mining has increased in scope in recent years, as exemplified by the ongoing Army and Navy operations in La Pampa, Madre de Dios region. As for combating wildlife trafficking and illegal logging, in addition to cleaning up pollution and supporting deforestation, these are all ongoing operations in which personnel from various units are engaged.

While crimes like IUU fishing and illegal mining make bigger headlines than reforestation, at this point in the world's history, combating all environmental crimes is equally essential. The Peruvian military is certainly not the only state institution involved in these activities – the Police are very engaged as well – but, given the plethora of other tasks and missions, combined with limited budgets, what the Peruvian Army, Navy, and Air Force have achieved and continue to achieve regarding environmental protection is very commendable. Keeping Peru clean and green is the duty of all Peruvians, and the Peruvian armed forces are certainly doing their share.

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