

Peru steps up modernisation plan to combat Shining Path

■ BY ANDREW WHITE

KEY POINTS

● Former special forces personnel will train Peru's elite units as operations against Shining Path guerrillas are intensified

● A contract is expected to include procurement of equipment, advanced tactical training and life-cycle support promise in theatre

The Peruvian Ministry of Defence (MoD) is to modernise its special forces as part of a wider strategy to combat a resurgence in activity by Shining Path guerrillas in the Ayacucho Valley, according to defence insiders.

Industry sources have told *Jane's* that US firm Aguius (Advanced Tactical Training) and Israeli company Global CST are understood to be bidding for a contract to provide an initial 10-month programme aimed at retraining and modernising an entire special forces counter-insurgency (COIN) brigade within the Peruvian Army. A contract is expected to be awarded in February 2010 with an initial deployment of training teams due to begin in March.

The news falls in line with the Peruvian government's response to an expanding threat from the Shining Path, also referred to as the Communist Party of Peru. According to media reports, the past 18 months have seen the Colombian drug cartels form an alliance with Shining Path guerrillas as a means to protect and transport coca to international shipment points.

A maximum of USD198 million has been earmarked for combat equipment and hardware procurement in 2010, with an overall budget for a three-year period of USD650 million. Sources said 80 per cent of funding would be made available for procurement with the remainder being earmarked for training and doctrinal modernisation.

Sources said Shining Path rebels had acquired "professional training" and assault weapons to assist the cartels while simultaneously continuing insurgent activity against the government. In 2009,

this included the shooting down of three Mil Mi-17 'Hip' medium helicopters, the death of 64 army and police personnel and injury to more than 220 others. Hostilities between the Shining Path and the government began in May 1980 on the eve of the presidential elections, when guerrillas burned ballot boxes in the town of Chuschi in the Ayacucho Valley.

Industry sources told *Jane's* that "very senior" defence officials in Peru and their "closest advisers" were briefed in October 2009 on plans from the private security companies, with the government receiving official proposals from Aguius and Global CST shortly after. This has subsequently initiated a process of "direct co-ordination" with the armed forces designed to provide

ing engaging a US or European programme office as part of a facilitation process to implement "professional and efficient" modernisation programme activities.

The winning contractor is expected to train, equip and sustain a 3,000-strong force comprising 900 special forces operators and 2,100 light-jungle infantrymen. This 'proof of concept' is likely to provide a template for the transformation of the wider Peruvian military and will focus on C4ISR (command, control, communications, computing, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) capabilities.

A shortlist of combat equipment has been drafted and includes eight to 12 short- to medium-range tactical unmanned aerial vehicles; 12 120 mm mortars with 1,800



Peruvian Army: 1308453

■ The Peruvian armed forces have stepped up efforts to combat Shining Path guerrillas in the Ayacucho Valley.

"tactical training programmes" and specific "logistical requirements".

Aguius and Global CST were then instructed to host a symposium on 15 December to "test the local defence community and media reaction" to the news. A spokesman for Aguius told *Jane's* that the symposium had been "quite supportive".

A final technical presentation is due to be unveiled in the first quarter of 2010 before a contractor is selected.

Any modernisation programme would comprise the procurement of equipment as well as the provision of advanced tactical training and life-cycle support. Sources added that the MoD was consider-

rounds of precision ammunition; 900 fourth-generation night-vision goggles; 900 weapon sights; 3,000 M4 assault rifles; 24 Mk19 40 mm grenade launchers (some to be mounted on helicopters); body armour and plates; and satellite radios.

A total of eight Peruvian Army Mi-17 helicopters will be up-armoured and equipped with door guns and upgraded to full forward-looking infrared (FLIR) capability alongside four Peruvian Air Force Mi-17s, which will be converted into gunships with FLIR systems. Finally, an unspecified number of Mil Mi-24 'Hind' attack helicopters will also be modernised and

upgraded with FLIR capabilities in order to provide close air support to ground troops.

One industry source told *Jane's*: "To fully achieve victory on the battlefield, the Peruvian Army needs to cover the full spectrum of requirements from individual tactical equipment to comprehensive C4ISR and targeting (with associated precision munitions), ground mobility, rotary- and fixed-wing aircraft, and the comprehensive capabilities and advanced training needed to conduct precision combined-arms operations in a mountain/jungle area."

Solutions are expected to include deployment of mobile training teams to permanent and temporary installations around Peru, with the incorporation of live and virtual training programmes. Aguius said it would post a total of 77 former US special forces instructors to Peru as part of the contract.

Specifically, training courses will concentrate on combat decision-making, offensive action in mountainous and jungle terrain, air assaults, night operations, close air support, temporary landing zone selection and voice and data communications down to platoon level.

President and Chief Executive Officer of Aguius, Michael Bingham, told *Jane's*: "Initial market and political intelligence indicates that the Peruvian government's new COIN strategy provides a solid opportunity for the family of Western-made COIN weapon systems, technology products and services."

The Peruvian Army has stated that operations against the Shining Path will continue indefinitely until the "last terrorist is eliminated". On 9 April, a 31-man Peruvian patrol was ambushed by the Shining Path near Sanabamba in the central Ayacucho region, resulting in 14 fatalities and four casualties. Shining Path guerrillas detonated explosive charges on the foot patrol's route before following up with small-arms fire.

This was the second ambush suffered by the Peruvian Army since the beginning of a renewed offensive against the Shining Path, which began in September 2008 in the Apurimac and Ene River Valley region. The previous ambush in Tayacaja (also in the Ayacucho region) on 9 October 2008 resulted in the deaths of 13 soldiers and two civilians.

Sources told *Jane's* that future operations would mostly involve the special forces.