

# JAPANESE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

**Situation:** Japanese Ambassador's Residence Attacked in Peru.

On December 17, 1996, fourteen members of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) seized the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Peru and took hundreds of dignitaries hostage who were attending a celebration of the Japanese Emperor's birthday. Through the attack, the MRTA hoped to discredit the government of President Alberto Fujimori and demanded the release of 465 MRTA members from prison.



The attackers soon released most of the hostages, keeping 72 captives that included several senior Peruvian government and military officials and 24 Japanese nationals. As the hostage situation continued, the Peruvian Government held talks with the terrorists but refused their demands. After a four-month standoff, a team of 140 Peruvian military and police commandos assaulted the residence on April 22, 1997. In the rescue operation, one hostage, two members of the rescue team, and all the MRTA terrorists died.

[This attack illustrates the ability of insurgents and terrorists to execute well-planned attacks. It is also a reminder of the importance of hostage survival techniques for victims of such politically motivated attacks.](#)



By 1996, the government of Peru had fought insurgent groups for many years and President Fujimori's counterterrorism policies had imprisoned 465 MRTA members.

For several months in late 1996, MRTA operatives rented a house next to the Japanese diplomatic residence where they stockpiled arms and explosives. On the day of the attack, MRTA members entered the residence disguised as kitchen workers for an official reception planned for the evening

of December 17. Police also permitted an ambulance to enter the compound in which several more MRTA members were hiding. At 8:20 PM terrorists in the neighboring house exploded a

hole through the wall of the diplomatic residence and rushed in to provide weapons to their members already in the compound.

A twelve-foot wall surrounded the residence, security grates covered bulletproof windows, and its doors were designed to withstand a grenade blast. Once the terrorists had seized control from within, it was easily defended.

Highly visible and politically important locations and events are potential targets for terrorist attack. Consider this as you plan your personal activities.

While the Government of Peru negotiated for an end to the crisis, its security forces prepared to free the hostages. During health and welfare visits with the hostages, Peruvian security operatives were able to emplace tiny listening and video devices within the residence. This enabled authorities to observe the terrorists' daily routines and listen to their



discussions of negotiation strategy. A miniature transceiver was also secretly provided to one of the hostages who was a Peruvian Navy Admiral expert in intelligence and commando operations. Through this surveillance, the Peruvians noted that a group of MRTA members gathered in a large room every day at the same time to play indoor soccer.

During these humanitarian visits, Peruvian authorities provided light colored clothing for the hostages to make them easily distinguishable from the black clad terrorists. The Peruvians also dug tunnels under the residence in preparation for a rescue attempt.

Minutes before the assault, the Navy Admiral hostage was alerted with a clandestine radio message and he discretely prepared the other hostages. The raid was launched by an explosion in the tunnel under the afternoon soccer game. The exploding floor killed or badly injured eight terrorists in the room. An assault vehicle crashed through the residence front door and commandos scaled walls to attack through the roof. As the Navy Admiral instructed them, the hostages dropped to the floor and remained motionless until the rescue team evacuated them.

Hostages should keep faith and confidence with their fellow hostages and cooperate with efforts to prepare for a rescue attempt.



The raid was a stunning success. Two of the Peruvian commandos were killed by a terrorist grenade and one hostage, already suffering from severe heart disease, died of a heart attack. All 14 MRTA terrorists were killed.

The Peruvian population greeted this news with pride and relief and Fujimori's approval ratings doubled to 70% overnight. Reports that some of the MRTA operatives were killed while attempting to surrender led to the attempted prosecution of 11 Peruvian Army officers in 2002, but an amnesty measure blocked their prosecution.

In this specific instance, a passive, cooperative posture by the hostages was effective. By cooperating with one another and with their captors, they survived to be rescued. During the raid, their light colored clothing provided a contrast to the dark clothed terrorists. They dropped to the floor during the assault and avoided any motion that might be mistaken for an aggressive act.