

# Peru soldiers kill 3 leftist rebels

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AYACUCHO, Peru --Three suspected leftist rebels were shot to death in a clash with troops in Peru's highland jungle Tuesday, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

An army platoon was met with gunfire from the suspected rebels while conducting an early morning patrol near the town of Huachocolpa, 165 miles southeast of the capital Lima, the military officials said in a statement.

An army official, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak with journalists, said the men were remnants of the Shining Path rebel group.

A soldier and an army officer were wounded in the clash, he said.

The rebels were part of a group headed by a guerrilla known as "Alipio," who allegedly runs protection for cocaine traffickers operating in the coca-growing region, the army official said.

Such attacks are often blamed on remnants of the Maoist Shining Path movement, which almost brought Peru's government to its knees in the 1980s and early 1990s with a campaign of massacres, political assassinations, bombings and sabotage.

Since the 1992 capture of Shining Path founder Abimael Guzman, the group has been reduced to a few hundred guerrillas who stage sporadic ambushes on security forces and provide protection to cocaine traffickers.