

# **2006/01/11-17 - NEW YORK - DOCUMENTARY - State of Fear, The Truth about Terrorism (on Peru) at Film Forum**

Lunes 12 de diciembre de 2005, por [Dial](#)

**Wednesday, January 11 - Tuesday, January 17 • One Week**

Showtimes: 1:15, 3:15, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00

## ***State of Fear, The Truth about Terrorism***

DIRECTED BY PAMELA YATES

PRODUCED BY PACO DE ONIS

EDITED BY PETER KINOY

USA / PERU 2005 • 94 MINUTES

IN ENGLISH & SPANISH  
WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

SKYLIGHT PICTURES, INC.

PLUS

## ***THE VLADI-VIDEOS***

7 MINUTES

PRODUCED BY SKYLIGHT PICTURES

**Filmmakers Pamela Yates & Paco de Onis in person!**

At the 8pm show on Wednesday, January 11th.

FOR 25 YEARS, PAMELA YATES, PETER KINOY AND SKYLIGHT PICTURES HAVE SET A GOLD STANDARD for elegant, intelligent, hard-hitting documentaries on Latin America. STATE OF FEAR uses the findings of the Peruvian Truth Commission to detail a 20-year reign of terror, beginning in 1980 with the Maoist Shining Path, whose bloody doings were met with equal violence from Peru's democratically elected government. Once the terrorists were subdued, fear of their return was used as an excuse by President Alberto Fujimori to institutionalize absolute power and propagate corruption (revealed to hilarious effect in THE VLADI-VIDEOS). The film transcends its immediate subject to become a cautionary tale of our current global war on terror.

[Skylight Pictures](#)

<http://www.filmforum.org/films/state.html>

---

## PRESENTATION:

How can an open society balance demands for security with democracy? *State of Fear* dramatizes the human and societal costs a democracy faces when it embarks on a “war” against terror, a “war” potentially without end, all too easily exploited by unscrupulous leaders seeking personal political gain. The film follows events in Peru, yet it serves as a cautionary tale for a nation like the United States. Filmmakers Pamela Yates, Paco de Onís and Peter Kinoy masterfully blend personal testimony, history and archival footage to tell the story of escalating violence in the Andean nation and how fear of terrorism was used to undermine the democracy, making Peru a virtual dictatorship where official corruption replaced the rule of law. Terrorist attacks by the Shining Path guerrillas provoked a military occupation of the countryside. Military justice replaced civil authority, widespread abuses by the Peruvian Army went unpunished, and the terrorism continued to spread. Nearly 70,000 civilians eventually died at the hands of the Shining Path and the Peruvian military.

## ACCLAIM FOR STATE OF FEAR:

“In all my years of working in the field of international human rights, I have never seen a film that so successfully describes a national struggle for justice and its universal implications. *State of Fear* is a must-see film for educators and activists working in the field of international human rights and Latin American studies.” Juan E. Méndez, President, International Center for Transitional Justice and United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide

“*State of Fear* is brilliant in conveying a story informed by its humane values and classical in its devotion to truth, like the best human rights reporting. It is remarkably fair, coherent and well documented. On Peru at this point it’s the gold standard; it has no peer.” Alexander Wilde, Chair, Board of Directors, Washington Office on Latin America

“*State of Fear* is a masterpiece. Through vivid depictions of several horrific attacks in Peru’s mountains, as well as through revealing, poignant interviews with innocent victims, soldiers, and insurgents, the film shows the agony that Peru’s war inflicted. The film is narrated primarily by distinguished members of Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, who emphasize that, if internal war is not to recur, we must understand its various causes and know its tragic effects. *State of Fear* is the most significant advance toward these ends in years.” Cynthia McClintock, Professor of Political Science, George Washington University

“*State of Fear* is a brilliant and moving film, which is both a portrait of Peru and a chronicle of terror and response - fanaticism, bravery, heroism, abject fear and the way everyone is affected by such events. It is what Orwell called the aim of great art, which was both imaginative in craftsmanship and politically committed at its heart.” Paul Theroux, Author

<http://www.skylightpictures.com/frame.html>

---

## INTERVIEW WITH THE FILMMAKERS

1) What is the history of the film? How did you come to this story and what inspired you to make the film?

Paco de Onís: We first learned about the Peruvian Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in January 2002 at a meeting at the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), and were intrigued by the

fact that it was the first TRC in Latin America to hold public hearings on its legacy of political violence. Since Pam and Peter and I have a long standing interest in Latin American social-political issues, we thought the Peruvian TRC offered a unique opportunity to hear and try to understand the human stories underlying a period of mass atrocities, and what led to the social upheaval. We decided to attend the public hearings, and as we listened to the testimonies we realized that the Peruvian TRC was really examining a 20-year "war on terror" with remarkable parallels to the global "war on terror" launched by the Bush administration. It became obvious to us that Peru's story presented a timely cautionary tale, and we developed STATE OF FEAR with that in mind - yet also so that the findings of the Peruvian TRC also would live on in the film and serve as a permanent reference for Peruvians of their reevaluated history. It was a real privilege for us to work with a great Peruvian crew that brought their own historical perspective to the production process - the combination of our differing but complementary perspectives strengthened the film and gave it universal resonance. We completed STATE OF FEAR in January 2005, 3 years after that initial meeting at the ICTJ.

2) When you were making the film, were there particular obstacles you encountered? Particular surprises?

Pamela Yates: What was particularly surprising was how this film became a long and deep journey of discovery. There was so much unknown when it came to Peru's war on terror. Plus, how to make a compelling film about a 20-year period of time in 94 minutes? I like to start any film, by talking to the people who really don't want to talk to me, and in this case it was the perpetrators of human rights abuses: on the one side, Shining Path militants and the other side those who carried out State terror--- some members of the Armed Forces. Slowly we found people who were at least willing to sit down and talk, I went into the prison where Shining Path militants were being held and listened to their stories for hours. I began to build relationships with people who had served in the Peruvian military. Over the years, after convincing them of how important it was to give their testimony, to tell what they did and witnessed, people finally began to agree to go on camera with their stories expressing what part they had played in Peru's war on terror. This was particularly true for The Child Soldier, The Marine, and The Guzmán Follower who play roles in STATE OF FEAR.

Another big obstacle was how to universalize the Peruvian story and make it relevant to today's world and compelling enough to grab a US and international audience's full attention. When we discovered the parallels between Peru's story and the current "war on terror," we decided to make those parallels subtle but clear so that STATE OF FEAR could become a cautionary tale. What happened in Peru is a story of epic proportions that the whole world can learn a great deal from.

Peter Kinoy: Completion of STATE OF FEAR occurred in a marathon of 5 months of intense editing. When it was all done, the sound mix completed, the color corrected and the final title created, I sat back and watched the show. To my horror it suddenly seemed to me that we had put much too much into the movie, and that audiences would be totally lost after the first ten minutes. I call this a form of "editorial psychosis." (The other form of editorial psychosis is when you are convinced that this is the greatest film ever made.) So it was with great trepidation that I sat in the world premiere, at the Chicago International Documentary Festival. To my relief not only did the audience totally stay with it and got it, but the film won the first of its many awards.

3) Can you discuss your approach to making the film, e.g. interviewing, research, shooting, editing?

Paco de Onís: Pam and Peter and I had a true collaboration every step of the way: from the initial development of the film; to later when Pam and I were in the field, we would confer with Peter who was looking at the footage as it came in back in NY; to the preparation of interview questions; and then to the editing process, during which we crafted the story. Collaboration is often an arduous process, but ultimately it leads to a very well developed narrative. It isn't often that a production can have the Editor, in this case Peter, working "side by side" with the Producer and Director during the actual shooting.

Pamela Yates: I wanted a feature film look for STATE OF FEAR, one that would make every image count. Through filmmaker friends, I was introduced to world class Peruvian cinematographer Juan Durán, who shoots features as well as documentaries. Together we came up with a look that conveys the epic scope of

the Peruvian story, and very carefully chose every image so that the audience had ample time to reflect on the past. Peru is an incredibly beautiful country from the Pacific coast, up through the Andean mountains, down into the verdant jungle. Our idea was to juxtapose that beauty with the terrible violence visited on the country. In doing so, it would recall the depth of the horror as well as capture the hope eternal of the human spirit.

Another important aspect of STATE OF FEAR was finding the right music, the right composer. I was looking for an ancient yet contemporary sound when we heard the haunting music of Tito la Rosa, which was perfect. He's a shaman who lives in the Andes and plays pre-Incan instruments like condor bones, conch shells, and ceramic flutes, creating a sound that transcends time. He travels and performs throughout Latin America and the US. We worked together to get the music for STATE OF FEAR to be mournful, as well as uplifting - music that was deeply Peruvian, without being folkloric.

Peter Kinoy: In STATE OF FEAR, our biggest editorial challenge was to create an exciting visual basis for an incredibly complex and fascinating story that was uncovered by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Almost our entire story takes place in the past, during a time when we weren't present to film. We had a three-fold challenge in terms of editorial presentation. First, there was the sheer breadth of the 30-year historical period, then the personal stories of a dozen different Peruvians, and finally the larger transcendent story of a "war on terror." We rejected the "TV" model of frenetic repetition and hyper-impact. Instead, we reached back to a more settled model, that of literature - binding the story between the covers of violence in Ayacucho and then letting each character have their moment on stage as they tell the part of the history that they were most intimately involved in.

The story is presented in the simplest way, a chronological narrative relay race, where each character hands off the baton to the next, starting in the 1970's and bringing us all the way to the present. We decided to include historic road signs, or chapter headings, that not only indicate the next time period to be examined, but also give a brief verbal description of the outstanding characteristic of that period, i.e. "Terror Takes Root". The final challenge was to create a working balance between the three main building blocks; the historical facts, the personal stories, and the over-arching themes. To do this we used a series of focus group screenings where we were able to refine and calibrate what the audience was getting or not getting.

4) After making this film, have you changed your views about particular aspects of this situation or story?

Paco de Onís: It hasn't really changed my views, but deepened my understanding of how a state of fear comes to be. I'm impressed by how quickly people respond to the Peruvian story as a reflection of our current realities vis-a-vis the "global war on terror", and the dangers our democracy faces as it weighs the balance between security and civil liberties.

Pamela Yates: As has been said, "History is an argument". What impressed me most about the Peruvian story was how the Peruvian Truth Commission changed Fujimori's official version of history: that in order to defeat terrorism a lot of people had to die, even innocents. The official version of what happened in Peru is now rewritten from the point of view of the victims, the disenfranchised, the poor, and is embodied in STATE OF FEAR.

Another thing I realized through the making of STATE OF FEAR was that asking whether one should exchange democracy for security is a false argument. We deserve both and can have both.

5) What are you working on now?

Paco de Onís: We're developing two projects: a film on the International Criminal Court and the history of the international justice movement, and a sequel to WHEN THE MOUNTAINS TREMBLE, a film we made in 1983 about the genocide committed against the indigenous people of Guatemala perpetrated by General Efraín Ríos Montt and his cohorts. A case is being prepared against the generals now by a Guatemalan human rights legal organization, CALDH, and they are going to use footage from our film as evidence in the case - the sequel will document the case and the use of documentary film in human rights

work.

6) If someone wanted to know what they could do with regards to some of the issues raised in the film, what would you suggest they do?

Paco de Onís: Follow the example of the human rights organizations in STATE OF FEAR - get active in an organization that is vigilant of our democracy - contribute funds or give your time when you can, keep our political representatives aware that we expect them to protect, not debase, our democracy.

[http://www.skylightpictures.com/filmmaker\\_intw.html](http://www.skylightpictures.com/filmmaker_intw.html)

---

NEWS PUBLISHED ON SKYLIGHTPICTURES WEBSITE:

**Peru's National Television Station (Canal 7) decides to air multiple broadcasts of State of Fear after Fujimori arrest in Chile**

We're pleased to tell you that Peru's National Television Channel (Canal 7), the most watched in the country, has decided to air multiple broadcasts of State of Fear over the coming year, which will have huge public impact and go a long way towards reasserting the findings of the Peruvian Truth Commission in the collective memory of the nation. As Peru enters a critical election year and ex-President Alberto Fujimori threatens to return, the State of Fear broadcasts will enrich the national debate over which direction the country should take as it continues to grapple with the legacy of a 20-year "war on terror". As Truth Commissioner Carlos Iván Degregori says in our film, "The Truth Commission believes that Peru must remember the terrible years we've lived through. If people have no memory, they don't know if they're coming or going, and are easily manipulated. The same for a country with no memory. It won't know its past, will repeat mistakes and be easily manipulated."

[http://www.skylightpictures.com/sof\\_news.html](http://www.skylightpictures.com/sof_news.html)