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Embassy, GUATEMALA

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ACTION: SECSTATE WASHDC

GUATEMALA
LIMDIS 3331

SUBJECT: PASCELL Sub-Committee Hearings on

Guatemalan Public Safety Program

REF: STATE 149759

Following are our comments with regard to the four questions listed in STATE 149759. We assume hearings will be in Executive Session and transcripts will not be made public.

1. The U.S. Government is aware of the tactics being used by the Government of Guatemala in combatting urban and rural terrorism, which is significantly inspired and aided by external communist sources. President ARANA, who was freely elected primarily on the basis of his promise to pacify the country and rid it of communist-inspired terrorism, is for the most part attempting to use standard, orthodox police methods in his efforts and the U.S. Government is in agreement with these methods which are designed to

POL:WPryce:nbm:9/2/71

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AIS:RCulbertson (in substance)

WILCO:RHandinger

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

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bring about a peaceful situation wherein Guatemalans can turn their full energies to solving their problems of economic and social development.

The Government of Guatemala has also on occasion engaged

~~engaged~~ in tactics with which we are not in agreement and in conversations with Guatemalan officials we have made our disagreement clear. These practices have included the illegal detention of suspected terrorists and the elimination of individuals the Government believed to be deeply involved in terrorist activity either as "intellectual leaders" or as combatants. There are indications that our efforts to convince GOG officials to curtail these illegal activities have met with limited success. While as noted above, we in no way condone the illegal tactics, we should also note that the Guatemalan Government believes itself to be in a situation akin to civil war, and that ~~the~~ communist-inspired terrorists have killed both military and civilians, including foreign representatives, and continue to represent a serious

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threat. Terrorist activities have created an atmosphere which has contributed to an increase in other criminal activity, as "common" criminals have followed terrorists' examples of violence, extortion, kidnaping, and murder.

He should also note that some degree of the right-wing terrorism which occurs in Guatemala is carried out by elements which supported the ARANA Government in the 1970 elections, but which are not a part of the Government. There are strong indications that President ARANA is troubled by these operations. In his July 27 speech he publicly criticized both right-wing and left-wing terrorists. There is also evidence that he has begun to take action to counter right-wing terrorism. For example, he recently ordered a raid by Government security forces on the home of Oliverio Castaneda, MLU Deputy and a notorious right-wing terrorist leader.

2. A takeover by a radically anti-U.S., militant, communist dominated government of the Castro type

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is the only eventuality in Guatemala which would in and of itself have a truly serious and deeply harmful adverse effect on U.S. security. We do not see this as a serious possibility at present.

However, the advent of a government considerably more repressive than the present one is a possibility the communist insurgents are seeking.

This could be harmful to U.S. interests in that it could increase the polarization of society and lead to political turmoil that the extreme left would attempt to turn to its own advantage. This eventuality could materialize ~~could come about~~ if army and hard-line right wing elements become convinced ARANA Government is not taking effective steps solve terrorist problem.

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political parties as being directed towards the improvement of legitimate police functions. The only criticism the Embassy has received from Guatemalan political leaders re U.S. assistance to the ARANA Government came last January, in the emotional period after the HJANGOS assassination, when certain opposition figures complained privately that U.S. assistance to this Government -- particularly Public Safety and Military Assistance -- was immoral and not in the long term U.S. interest. However, this representation did not contain even the hint of a suggestion that either program was involved in supporting terrorist operations.

Over the past six weeks the Embassy has discussed the problem of violence in Guatemala with a wide ^{range} of opposition political leaders including representatives of the PR, OCG, and URD. There has been ample opportunity for criticism of the U.S. Public Safety Program and none has occurred.

The problems faced by the Guatemalan police are formidable, and are a long

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way from being solved completely. Our assistance has, however, been a positive force in helping the Guatemalan Police to meet their challenges in a professional, legal manner. The level of our Public Safety assistance is, of course, subject to constant review. However, it would be a serious mistake to cut off this assistance abruptly. Such action would be taken by the GOG as an unjustified and unfriendly act, would be considered by the GOG as an indication that we are no longer interested in helping them solve the problem of terrorism, would probably lead to greater use of illegal tactics by GOG, and could well impede our ability to help Guatemala in its effort towards development.

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ACTION: SECSTATE WASHDC

GUATEMALA 3831
LIMDIS

SUBJECT: FASCELL, Sub-Committee Hearings on
Guatemala Public Safety Program

REF: STATE 146758

Following are our comments with regard to the four questions listed in STATE 146758. We assume hearings will be in Executive Session and transcripts will not be made public.

1. The U.S. Government is aware of the tactics being used by the Government of Guatemala in combatting urban and rural terrorism, which is significantly inspired and aided by external communist sources. President Arana, who was freely elected primarily on the basis of his promise to pacify the country and rid it of communist-inspired terrorism, is for the most part attempting to use standard, orthodox police methods in his efforts and the U.S. Government is in agreement with these methods which are designed to

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bring about a peaceful situation wherein Guatemalans can turn their full energies to solving their problems of economic and social development.

The Government of Guatemala has also on occasion engaged in tactics with which we are not in agreement and in conversations with Guatemalan officials we have made our disagreement clear. These practices have included the illegal detention of suspected terrorists and the elimination of individuals the Government believed to be deeply involved in terrorist activity either as "intellectual leaders" or as combatants. There are indications that our efforts to convince GOG officials to curtail those illegal activities have met with limited success. While as noted above, we in no way condone the illegal tactics, we should also note that the Guatemalan Government believes itself to be in a situation akin to civil war, and that communist-inspired terrorists have killed both military and civilians, including foreign representatives, and continue to represent a serious

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threat. Terrorist activities have created an atmosphere which has contributed to an increase in other criminal activity, as "common" criminals have followed terrorists' examples of violence, extortion, kidnapping and murder.

We should also note that some degree of the right-wing terrorism which occurs in Guatemala is carried out by elements which supported the ARANA Government in the 1970 elections, but which are not a part of the Government. There are strong indications that President ARANA is troubled by these operations. In his July 27 speech he publicly criticized both right-wing and left-wing terrorists.

There is also evidence that he has begun to take action to counter right-wing terrorism. For example, he recently ordered a raid by Government security forces on the home of Oliverio Castañeda, MLN Deputy and a notorious right-wing terrorist leader.

2. A takeover by a radically anti-U.S., militant, communist dominated government of the Castro type

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is the only eventuality in Guatemala which would in and of itself have a truly serious and deeply harmful adverse effect on U.S. security. We do not see this as a serious possibility at present.

However, the advent of a government considerably more repressive than the present one is a possibility the communist insurgents are seeking. This could be harmful to U.S. interests in that it could increase the polarization of society and lead to political turmoil that the extreme left would attempt to turn to its own advantage. This eventuality could materialize/could come about if Army hard-line right wing elements become convinced ARANA Government is not taking effective steps solve terrorist problem.

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3. U.S. is supplying commodities, technical advice and training to increase effectiveness of National Police and Treasury Police in maintaining law and order and repressing terrorism of extreme right and extreme left within framework of constitutionality, and with the objective of developing professional police forces to enforce and encourage respect for the law. The U.S. Public Safety Program is not involved in assistance to or cooperation with terrorist operations of any type. To the best of our knowledge no assistance supplied by the U.S. has been used directly or indirectly in these operations. U.S. Public Safety assistance has been designed to encourage support and improve standard legitimate police operations in combatting terror as well as common crime.

4. No. Contrary to the misleading innuendos put forth by some members of the U.S. and international press, the U.S. Public Safety Program in Guatemala is not associated by the mainstream of the Guatemalan body politic with terrorist tactics. This assistance is generally recognized by all major

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political parties as being directed towards the improvement of legitimate police functions. The only criticism the Embassy has received from Guatemalan political leaders re U.S. assistance to the ARANA Government came last January, in the emotional period after the MIJANGOS assassination, when certain opposition figures complained privately that U.S. assistance to this Government – particularly Public Safety and Military Assistance – was immoral and not in the long term U.S. interest. However this representation did not contain even the hint of a suggestion that either program was involved in supporting terrorist operations.

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