

TELEGRAM

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	FROM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA	CLASSIFICATION SECRET UNCLASSIFIED																				
E.O. 11652 TAGS: SUBJECT:	12356: DECL: 8/8/88 PINT, SNAR, PINS, CVIS, HO IMPACT OF TORRES ARIAS DEFECTION																					
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<p>AMB DCM POL-2 DÃO MILGP</p>	<p>1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT</p> <p>2. I have during past couple of days taken soundings with regard to impact of Colonel Torres' sensational press conference in Mexico City.</p> <p>3. My first stop was President Suazo's office on September 7. Suazo related the circumstances surrounding Armed Forces Superior Council expulsion of Torres from the Armed Forces. He was impressed by the fact that General Alvarez had sufficient confidence in his following</p>																					

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to deliberately absent himself from the Superior Council meeting at which Torres was expelled. As for Torres' charges that Alvarez was improperly promoted, an accusation which interestingly occupies almost one-third of his Mexico City declaration, Doctor Suazo said this was sheer nonsense. Torres was obviously confused between the military government in which he had operated and the new constitutional system. Under previous regime it is true Armed Forces Council had decisive say in top-level promotions; but under new constitution President and Congress ~~had~~ had decisive voice. Doctor Suazo recalled that his nomination of Alvarez for promotion to General and to ~~be~~ ~~XXX~~/Commander of Armed Forces had been approved by a vote of eighty to zero in Congress.

4. I asked Suazo about judicial proceedings against Torres. He confirmed press reports that government would initiate legal proceedings against Torres for treason and possibly a few civil charges as well. Suazo did not seem concerned over domestic impact of Torres' remarks; but he was worried about adverse international press play. I told Suazo we had report Torres had gone to Madrid o/a September one; but no further news. Suazo said he would appreciate any information we might provide on regular basis as to Torres' whereabouts.

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5. Same afternoon I called on Nationalist Party leader and former presidential candidate Ricardo Zuniga to hear his views. Zuniga was confident that no member of his party would seek to exploit Torres issue for domestic political purposes. Only Christian Democrats in Congress might agitate to give Torres the platform he is seeking here; but with absolutely overwhelming majority of Liberals and Nationalists combined, Zuniga doubted any such effort would bear fruit. Besides, with narcotics involvement of Torres now out in the open and judicial proceedings underway against him, Zuniga doubted Torres would come back to Honduras. Zuniga was certain Torres had acted out of bitterness against Alvarez. Former had always been aloof and conspiratorial; latter was direct, open and popular. "Nobody is a ~~xxx~~ saint (Zuniga should know), but I always liked that boy Alvarez a lot better than Torres." Zuniga was convinced that extreme left behind Torres declaration and he noted interesting ~~xxx~~ coincidence that most vocal support locally for Torres submitting his views to Congress was from ALIPO faction and prominent leftist Jorge Arturo Reina. Zuniga also ~~said~~ that he had talked to a number of ~~army~~ army officers of all ranks and he found them to be uniformly behind Alvarez.

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6. Zuniga expressed alarm over report he had heard to effect that Torres might be invited to speak before United States Congress. I told him I hadn't heard anything to this effect but would check. (Septel being sent on question of Torres' visas. I believe allowing him in the U.S. at this time would be improper from a number of points of view.)
7. Morning September 8 I called on President of Congress, Efrain Bu Giron to go over same ground. Bu was in very much same frame of mind as Suazo and Zuniga. He saw no prospect of this issue stirring a debate in Congress. He was convinced Torres had acted out of personal bitterness. And if Torres had been so upset about all these things why had he never made his views better known while in Honduras. Finally, Bu observed, Torres was a lousy Chief of Police. All the bank robberies took place during his tenure and the police were not nearly so effective under his ~~xxxxxx~~ command as they were before or after. Bu also referred to Torres' involvement in the narcotics business.
8. COMMENT: I suspect Zuniga was right when he said ~~Torres~~ case will cause a bit of fuss abroad; but will not likely be significant cause for divisiveness here. Torres' complete lack of credibility in Honduran eyes should make it difficult for him to sustain any

meaningful political challenge to present GOH. Nonethe-
less, we can't rule out that the extreme left in its
~~excessive~~ cynicism will seek to exploit Torres to the
hilt.

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