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**MILITARY  
INTELLIGENCE  
SUMMARY**

**VOLUME VIII  
LATIN AMERICA (U)**

FEBRUARY 1978

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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (MIS) (U)

VOLUME VIII

LATIN AMERICA

DDB-2680-108-78

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PREFACE

~~(S)~~ The Military Intelligence Summary (MIS), published in eight volumes, is a synopsis of military intelligence worldwide. Intended to serve as a ready reference, the MIS presents a compilation of intelligence on those forces which contribute to the military security of each country, and on the political and economic factors affecting the country's military capability. Published semiannually, the MIS serves to update information in other DIA publications.

(U) Unless otherwise indicated, the information in Volumes IV and VIII is that available in DIA as of 1 April and 1 October. The data cutoff date for the other volumes is 1 January and 1 July.

(U) Information summarized in the MIS is available in detail in numerous DIA publications. A list of related publications, both completed and scheduled, is published in the Register of Intelligence Publications (DDS-2600-37) and the Defense Intelligence Production Schedule (DDM-2600-35). The Intelligence Users Guide (DDM-2600-397) explains how to obtain finished intelligence products and services from DIA.

(U) Addressees are requested to forward information which will supplement or correct this volume. Questions and comments should be referred in writing to the Defense Intelligence Agency (ATTN: DB-3E), Washington, D.C. 20301.

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Date: Oct 17, 2018

III  
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~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ORIENTATION MAP

ARGENTINA  
BOLIVIA  
BRAZIL  
CHILE  
COLOMBIA  
CUBA  
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC  
ECUADOR  
EL SALVADOR  
GUATEMALA  
GUYANA  
HAITI  
HONDURAS  
JAMAICA  
MEXICO  
NICARAGUA  
PANAMA  
PARAGUAY  
PERU  
URUGUAY  
VENEZUELA

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Date: Oct 17, 2018

v  
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~~SECRET~~

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

GUATEMALA

Page determined to be Unclassified  
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GUATEMALA

1. ~~(S//NOFORN)~~ Political-Military Situation: Guatemala is a republic with a popularly elected President and legislature. The military has exerted considerable influence over the Government in recent years, however, and there have been charges that the current President, Brigadier General Kjell Laugerud García (Army, retired), did not win a majority of the popular vote. He was inaugurated President on 1 July 1974 for a four-year term. Although politically inexperienced, President Laugerud has taken tight hold of the reins of government and has proven to be a capable chief of state. For example, after Guatemala suffered a devastating earthquake on 4 February 1976, President Laugerud received much credit and praise for the extremely well organized disaster relief. The reconstruction effort continues and is progressing well.

~~(S//NOFORN)~~ Since mid-1976, there has been a resurgence of terrorist activity by members of the extreme left who have threatened both military personnel and right-wing politicians. The increase is probably due to the insurgents' desire to put pressure on the Government prior to the March 1978 national elections. In January 1977, the Guatemalan Army launched a counterinsurgency operation in Quiché province, where terrorist activities have been most prevalent. This drive has been directed against the Guerrilla Army of the Poor, the most powerful insurgent threat in Guatemala. Because of the remoteness of this area, the Army has been unable to exert any effect upon the guerrillas and is unlikely to achieve a decisive action against them.

~~(S//NOFORN)~~ Also since mid-1976, the political situation in Guatemala has become more active. Hardline antiterrorist attitudes have resurfaced, as various parties have been preparing for the coming elections. In addition, Guatemala's traditionally hostile stance toward Belize has been receiving increased attention. President Laugerud has retained support for his moderate policies,

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1

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GUATEMALA

1. Political-Military Situation--Continued

but in time he may be forced to adopt a more rigid position and a more severe approach, especially in regard to internal security.

~~(S//NOFORN)~~ Traditionally good relations with the United States soured somewhat in March 1977 when it became known that the U.S. Secretary of State's report to the U.S. Congress on human rights criticized Guatemala for past abuses. Considering this to be strictly an internal affairs issue, the Guatemalan Government responded by rejecting all U.S. military aid and all sales of military equipment that are conditional on the issue of human rights. Since the United States is Guatemala's principal trading partner and has provided considerable technical and economic assistance, relations probably will recover from their present low, but it is unlikely they will be as close as they once were.

~~(S//NOFORN)~~ A major item of Guatemalan national preoccupation is the future status of Belize (formerly British Honduras), a United Kingdom dependency. Guatemala claims sovereignty over Belize based on territorial exploration by Christopher Columbus and on Spanish colonial government jurisdiction. U.K. claims are based on the establishment of a colony in 1638 by shipwrecked British sailors. The British would like to grant independence to Belize but fear that, if they did, Guatemala would invade Belize and annex the territory.

~~(S//NOFORN)~~ Relations with the United Kingdom have been sporadically tense for many years. Tension increased in 1975 when Guatemala augmented its forces in the Peten region bordering Belize; the U.K. countered by sending more troops to its dependency. Ministerial negotiations which began in April 1976 managed temporarily to ease tensions, and each side withdrew some troops. In June 1977, certain inflammatory statements by Guatemalan officials, coupled with Guatemala's anger caused by Barbados' seizure of a shipment of 5.56-mm ammunition destined for Guatemala,

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DIA FOIA & Declassification Services Offices  
Date: Oct 17, 2018

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GUATEMALA

resulted in the British making a large increase in the Belize garrison. Guatemala responded by making preparations for a conflict. In early July 1977, the situation was on the brink of war, but an apparently productive round of negotiations managed to relax tensions. It appears that Guatemala would accept, in principle, the existence of an independent Belize, provided Guatemala were ceded some territory. The future of negotiations is uncertain, and the issue remains a politically explosive one in Guatemala.

~~(S//NOFORN)~~ Guatemala's Armed Forces are capable of defending the country against invasion by any of its Central American neighbors. They could conduct successful small-scale operations against El Salvador, Honduras, or--provided British elements were not present--Belize. The Guatemalan Army appears to be making a concerted effort to replace much of its obsolete equipment with new arms, purchased mainly from Belgium, Israel, Portugal, and France. This seems to be part of a program to prepare its forces for possible use against Belize. These arms are being obtained from non-U.S. sources because of Washington's past reluctance to supply Guatemala with the massive military assistance desired and the present U.S. policy of making aid dependent upon respect for human rights. Nevertheless, the U.S. is honoring past commitments for military supplies by providing Guatemala with limited quantities of 5.56-mm ammunition.

~~(S//NOFORN)~~ The Guatemalan Armed Forces are weakened by a top-heavy senior officer corps, absence of a career program for NCO's, and still much obsolete equipment. Officially designated the Army of Guatemala, the Armed Forces consist almost exclusively of a ground element (popularly called the Guatemalan Army), plus a small Air Force and Navy. The President is titular Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, with control highly centralized under the Minister of National Defense, who is normally a senior Army officer. The military establishment theoretically is commanded by the Army Chief of Staff. In practice, however, the Minister of National Defense tends to communicate directly with

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GUATEMALA

the Chiefs of the Air Force and Navy. The Armed Forces are generally pro-West, and have experienced no significant Communist penetration. Their ties with the United States have generally deteriorated and they are turning more to other Free World countries for assistance in obtaining supplies and training. Their public image, although poor in the past, has been generally improving because of increased professionalism and participation in civic action projects, particularly in disaster relief activities following the February 1976 earthquake.

2. (U) Key Officials:

President: Ejeil Laugerud Garcia (Brig Gen, Army, Ret)

Minister of Foreign Relations: Adolfo Molina Orantes

Minister of National Defense: Brig Gen Otto Guillermo Spiegelner Noriega (Army)

Army: Chief of Staff, Brig Gen David Cancinos Barrios

Navy: Commander, Captain José Antonio Contreras

Roca (Acting) 1/

Air Force: Commander, Col Roberto José Francisco

Salazar Asturias

National Police: Director General Col Mario Gustavo

Cardona Maldonado

3. (U) Military Budget: \$41,273,890 proposed for fiscal year ending 31 December 1977; 5.2% of the proposed central government budget and about 1.0% of estimated GNP. No service allocation is available. Dollar value converted from quetzales at the exchange rate of one quetzal equals US \$1.00.

4. (U) Population: 6,099,000 as of 1 July 1977  
Males (ages 15-49): 1,489,000; physically fit, 966,000;  
63,000 reach military age (18) annually  
Ethnic Divisions: 41.4% Indian, 58.6% Ladino 2/  
Literacy: About 30%

5. ~~(U)~~ Army:

Personnel Strength: 12,480 (980 officers, 1,545 NCO's, 6,915 privates, 2,470 specialists, and 570 students and cadets).

1/ Rear Adm Ricardo Peralta Méndez, Commander of the Navy, is running for President in the 1978 elections. It is not known whether he will ever reassume his Navy position.

2/ Westernized Indian, mestizo, and white.

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Date: Oct 17, 2018

4  
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GUATEMALA

5. ~~(C)~~ Army—Continued

Reserve: 35,000 semi-trained.  
Major Units: 4 brigades (1 infantry battalion each), 10 separate battalions (5 infantry, 1 airborne infantry, 1 military police, 1 engineer, 1 training, 1 transportation), and 2 separate battalion-equivalent units (Presidential Guard, Mobile Military Police). In addition, there is 400-man Tactical Group, stationed at La Aurora Air Base for airport security.  
Major Equipment: 12 105-mm howitzers, 12 75-mm pack howitzers, 12 106.7-mm (4.2-inch) mortars, 5 M113 and 5 M113A1 armored personnel carriers, 10 RBV Mk. 1 armored personnel carriers (Israel), and 7 Cadillac Gage V-100 armored cars. In addition, items in the inventory of questionable combat effectiveness because of age are 15 M8 and 4 M3A1 armored cars which are of World War II vintage. The Army is currently working on the M8's, including the installation of new engines which should make these armored cars effective. Seven World War II M3 light tanks are considered so obsolete as to be useless.

6. ~~(C)~~ Navy:

Personnel Strength: 453 (40 general service officers, 7 Marine officers, 206 general service enlisted, and 200 enlisted Marines).

Reserve: None.

Ships: 15: 11 Motor Gunboats (PGM) (1 32-meter, 2 25.9-meter, 5 19.8-meter, 1 19.2-meter, 2 12.2-meter), 2 Patrol Boats (PB) (2 11-meter), 1 mechanized landing craft (LCM), 1 floating workshop (YR). <sup>1/</sup>

Units: The Navy is a small patrol force, with two naval bases (one on the Caribbean and one on the Pacific Coast) and one Marine Company of five platoons (four platoons on the Caribbean; one platoon on the Pacific Coast).

7. ~~(C)~~ Air Force:

Personnel Strength: 470 (65 officers, 405 enlisted), including 60 pilots.

Reserve: None.

Units: 4 squadrons (1 fighter, 1 transport, 1 helicopter, and 1 maintenance).

<sup>1/</sup> In addition, two 8.5-meter patrol boats are out of the water and apparently not salvageable.

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GUATEMALA

7. ~~(S)~~ Air Force--Continued

Aircraft: 59: 13 jet (11 A-37B fighters, 2 T-33 trainers);  
10 turboprop (transports - 9 Arava's, 1 C-12 Super King  
Afr); 22 prop (12 transports - 1 DC-6B, 11 C-47's; 4  
utility - 3 Cessna 296's, 1 Cessna 180; 6 trainers -  
Cessna 172); 14 heli (utility - 9 OH-1H, 3 Alouette  
III, 2 Lama).

8. ~~(S)~~ Paramilitary: None. The civil police consist of  
two distinct forces, both subordinate to the Ministry of  
Government (Interior). Personnel strength: National  
Police - 5,573; Treasury Police - 1,058.

9. (U) Key U.S. Officials: (all in Guatemala City except  
as indicated):

Chief of Mission: Ambassador David E. Boster  
Chief, AID Mission: Edward A. Cox  
Defense Attaché and Army Attaché: Col John F. Book  
Naval Attaché (Mexico City): Capt Eddie F. Best  
Air Attaché (Tegucigalpa): Col Delmore L. Fenseden  
Military Group Commander and Chief Army Section:  
Col Charles D. Corbett 1/  
Chief, Navy Section: Cdr William S. Brown, Jr.  
Chief, Air Force Section: Lt Col Jerold Eustace

10. (U) Foreign Military Presence: There are Israelis  
in Guatemala training Guatemalan Air Force personnel  
on maintenance of the Arava aircraft. It is believed  
that these advisors are military reserve personnel.

1/ Col Corbett is to be replaced in March 1978 by  
Col Donald R. Loy.

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