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FROM CLASSIFICATION AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA المستفاد الالالالا E.O. 11652X QN: 7662 12356: DECL: 8/8/88 TAGS: PINT, SNAR, PINS, CVIS, HO SUBJECT: IMPACT OF TORRES ARIAS DEFECTION ACTION: SECSTATE WASHDC . INFO: AMEMBASSY BOGOTA AMEMBASSY BONN AMEMBASSY CARACAS AMEMBASSY LONDON AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA MMEMBASSY PARIS AMEMBASSY MANAGUA AMEMBASSY ROME AMEMBASSY MEXICO AMEMBASSY PANAMA AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR AMEMBASSY MADRID USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN TEGUCIGALPA 7662 1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT I have during past couple of days taken soundings with regard to impact of Colonel Torres' sensational press conference in Mexico City. AMB My first stop was President Suazo's office on DCM POL-2 September 7. Suazo related the circumstances surrounding DÃO Armed Forces Superior Council expulsion of Torres from MILGP the Armed Forces. He was impressed by the fact that General Alvarez had sufficient confidence in his following

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OPTIONAL FORM 153 (Formerly FS-413) January 1975 Dept. of State

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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 Fresident and Congress NAW had decisive voice. Doctor Suazo recalled that his nomination of Alvarez for promotion to General be and to NAW/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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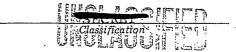
Same afternoon I called on Nationalist Party leader and former presidential candidate Ricardo Zuniga to hear Zuniga was confident that no member of his party would seek to exploit Torres issue for domestic political purposes. Only Christian Democrats in Congress might agitate to give Torres the platform 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 waw 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 men coincidence that most vocal support locally for Torres submitting his views to Congress was from ALIPO faction and prominent leftist Jorge Arturo Reina. -said that he had talked to a number of 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 ERMXER 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



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meaningful political challenge to present GOH. Nonetheless, we can't rule out that the extreme left in its EXMXEXXX cynicism will seek to exploit Torres to the hilt.

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