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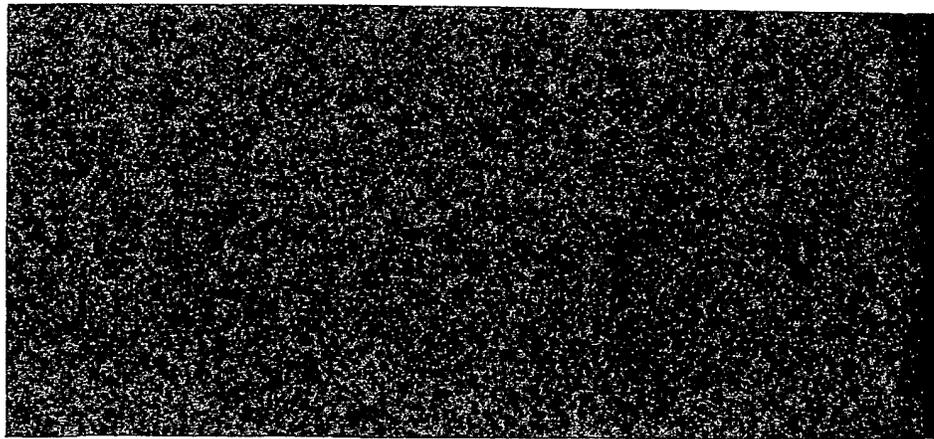


Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

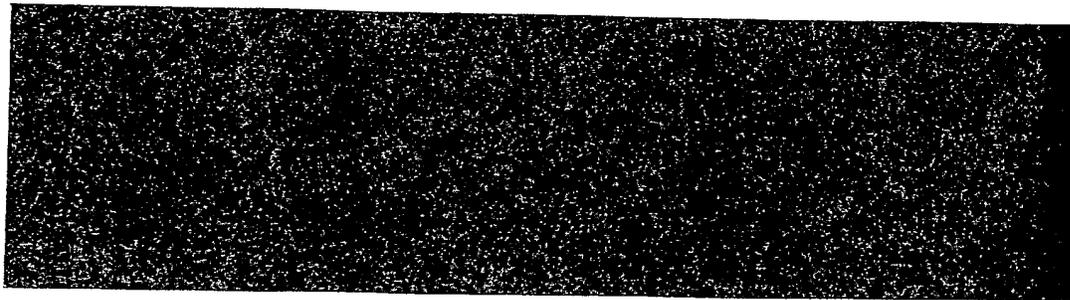
12 September 1988

GUATEMALA: Potential for a Coup



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Civil-military tensions in Guatemala have escalated in three key areas since the failed 11 May coup, and the risk of another putsch is high. Officers are expressing strong criticism of the



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government's conduct of national security issues, particularly its handling of the counterinsurgency. In addition, there is strong concern about civilian meddling in the military, and growing numbers of officers believe that Minister of Defense Gramajo is ineffective in dealing with the President. Finally, President Cerezo's economic policies and slowness to weed out corrupt government officials have fueled more discontent within the officer corps. [REDACTED]

Motives For Coup Plotting

[REDACTED] the critical force driving coup plotting among officers is the perception that top civilian and military leaders are undermining efforts to defeat the leftist insurgency.

[REDACTED]

Many officers are also concerned over what they perceive as a high tolerance of corruption by Cerezo

[REDACTED]

Officers also have long harbored suspicions that the President is trying to gain control of the Army and make it subservient to civilians.

[REDACTED]

The military has been concerned throughout Cerezo's term that the President is trying to manipulate military politics.

[REDACTED]

Policy initiatives undertaken by Cerezo have aggravated the situation. His previous diplomatic openings toward Cuba and the

Soviet Union--such as allowing their press representatives to establish offices in Guatemala-- [REDACTED]

Talks in late August between the Guatemalan National Reconciliation Commission and Marxist guerrillas ended in failure [REDACTED]

Economic reforms implemented in August are perceived as making life more expensive for the average citizen--but especially the soldier in the field--and are further fueling discontent in the military. [REDACTED]

A clique of wealthy rightwing businessmen and retired officers who have long resented Cerezo's ascendancy to power are pursuing a campaign to foment unrest in the Army and to discredit the President. [REDACTED]

Threat to Gramajo

Minister of Defense Gramajo--who is criticized for pursuing political ambitions and ignoring his military obligations--probably is in more immediate jeopardy than is the President. [REDACTED]

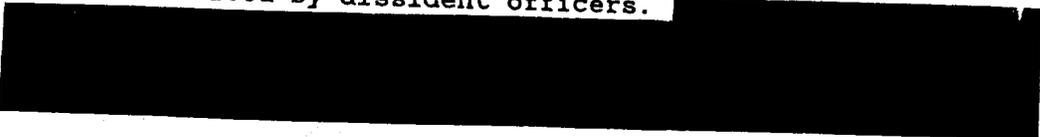
Gramajo has tried to defuse tensions in the military by reassuring the officer corps that he supports their concerns and is a reliable advocate on their behalf with the President, [REDACTED]



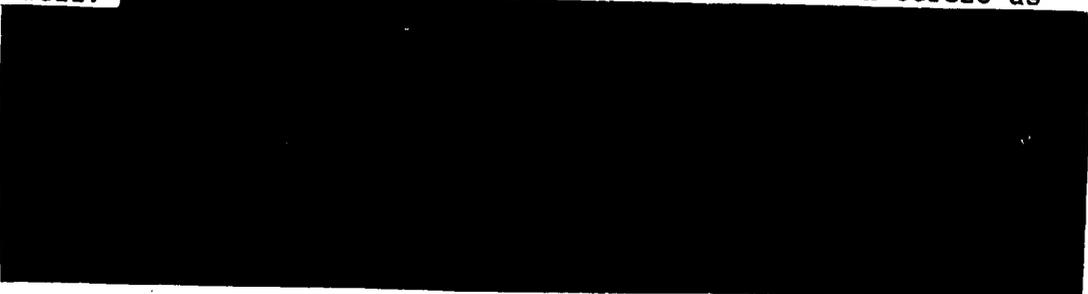
Risks to Cerezo

The President lacks the clout to intervene in a decisive way on the issue of Gramajo's tenure because he is himself vulnerable. If Cerezo fights to keep Gramajo in place, rightwing dissidents probably would be able to convince key senior officers to back a coup. If he acquiesces in Gramajo's removal, he would face an Army increasingly resistant to civilian direction.

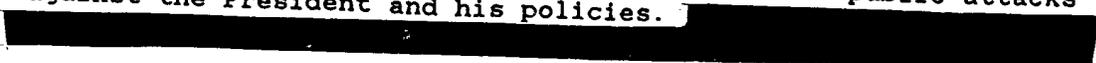
The removal of General Gramajo by Cerezo might initially defuse some of the unrest within the military and buy time for the civilian government. At a minimum, it would be seen in the Army as a signal of the President's commitment to address concerns voiced by dissident officers.



The ouster of Gramajo, however, would carry risks which could aggravate civil-military tensions and threaten Cerezo as well.



Even if Cerezo manages to improve relations with the military, the extreme right is likely to continue public attacks against the President and his policies.



[REDACTED]

Outlook

A coalition of dissident officers and the political rightwing is likely to make another attempt to oust President Cerezo and Minister of Defense Gramajo before the end of the year unless present civil-military tensions are defused. Even though the extremists have been unable to rally broadbased support for such a move so far, their schemes are likely to gain momentum if the President fails to adjust some of his most irritating policies and Gramajo remains in place. [REDACTED] a coup is likely if the following conditions exist:

- Three of the four key military units based in Guatemala City--the Mariscal Zavala Brigade, Air Force Tactical Group, Honor Guard Brigade, and Presidential Guard--agree to back a coup.
- At least one person with political stature, such as Chief of Staff Callejas or Honor Brigade Commander Marroquin, agrees to support the ouster and help restructure a post-Cerezo government.
- The plotters believe they have an effective strategy to deflect international criticism. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] not [REDACTED] all the elements necessary for another coup attempt are currently in place. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] However, the momentum and cooperation necessary for a successful coup could build suddenly and with little advance warning. [REDACTED]

If the President were ousted in a coup, the military probably would establish a caretaker government headed by a civilian and announce its intent to hold new elections. [REDACTED]

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