

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
RELEASE AS SANITIZED

4287

General

2003

1 December 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR: Special Deputy to CWH, Project PBSUCCESS

SUBJECT : Location of Embassy, Guatemala, and Occupancy  
of Space Therein

1. The following information is set forth in order that it may be a matter of record and guidance to you in considering factors relating to operations in this Project. The Embassy is in a six-story building located on the Northeast corner of 8th Avenue (one way going South) and 12th Street (one way going West). The Government's communications offices (telephone exchange, post office, radio transmitter antenna, and other equipment for communications purposes) are in a large building between 7th and 8th Avenues on the North side of 12th Street. The Palace of communications in which the government's communications officers are located face on 12th Street for the entire block. The Palace of communications is slightly higher than the Embassy--perhaps one floor. The American Club, one of the two most prominent downtown clubs, which has two bars, bowling alleys, dining room and large hall used for banquets and dances and a library, is located on the Southwest corner of 8th Avenue and 12th Street. There are commercial houses on the Southeast corner of the same intersection. The American Club and the commercial houses on the afore-mentioned corners are not as high as the Embassy and as a result from windows in the Embassy on the upper floors, it is possible to observe for a considerable distance across the roofs of the city buildings, including the Headquarters of the Guardia Civil located at 7th Avenue and 14th Street. During a previous revolutionary attempt bullets from the Guardia Civil building have penetrated the Embassy. Our offices, however, are not located on that side of the Embassy building. The Embassy is in a fairly busy area of downtown Guatemala City, is located four blocks South and 1 block East of the Southeast corner of the Central Plaza. The National Palace where the President and members of his cabinet have offices is on the North side of 6th Street between 6th and 7th Avenues and faces South towards the mentioned Central Plaza. The National Cathedral faces West and is located on the East side of the Central Plaza. The Central Plaza covers the area between 6th Street on the North, 8th Street on the South, 7th Avenue on the East and 6th Avenue on the West. Another park,

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known as Centenario, joins the Central Plaza to the West, i.e., between 6th Street on the North, 8th Street on the South, 6th Avenue on the East, and 5th Avenue on the West. The Central Plaza and the Plaza Centenario in combination make a large area comparable to four square blocks where parades and demonstrations terminate. Such manifestations usually begin at about 18th Street and proceed north on 6th Avenue to the Central Plaza which is invariably the area for termination of any parades. These parades and demonstrations proceed north on 6th Avenue, although that Avenue is in fact a one way street going south. Government permission (legally) must be obtained for any demonstration. It can be seen that the Embassy is two blocks away from the customary line of march (6th Avenue) and five blocks away from the real center of interest, i.e., the danger area of practically any demonstration. Sixth Avenue is a theater and commercial house district, which is the nearest thing in Guatemala to a combination of Fifth Avenue and Times Square, New York. It is not possible to observe activities in the Central Plaza from the roof of the Embassy because of the obstructions caused by buildings in downtown Guatemala City. There are no buildings immediately adjoining the American Embassy more than two stories high.

## 2. Occupancy of space in the Embassy

The sixth floor (referred to locally as the roof), which is actually considered a roof because it is not a fully covered story, houses a room of elevator machinery, a small quonset hut for storage of Embassy supplies, a room with mimeograph machines, paper supplies therefor, and a room occupied by the Embassy commissary, which is freely operated, carries staple products, canned and bottled goods, delicacies, sometimes frozen foods such as hams, chickens, which are imported, butter, margarine, cheese, ice cream, liquors, condiments, dry milk, cereals, etc. It does not carry local meats, nor fresh milk or vegetables, except lettuce. Adequate supplies are available at all times in the commissary to provide an adequate ration for the entire staff for an extended period—three weeks or more. No revolution, in my opinion, could conceivably last for such a period. No other group of persons in Guatemala City would be as well supplied.

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3. The fifth floor (referred to locally as the fourth) is occupied by the Air Attache, Colonel Vernon L. Martin, and his two assistant Air Attaches, Lt. Colonel Theodore MacAdams and Major Vernon Ingraham, with a staff of an American secretary, Sergeant Steppe, who does the photographic work, a communications operator for the Attache's plane, a warrant officer, and a Guatemalan receptionist. The Army Attache has an American clerk-stenographer, a warrant officer, and a Guatemalan receptionist who is, incidentally, the sister of the receptionist for the Air Attache. Both are daughters of Adrian Recinos, a former Ambassador to the United States and a former candidate for President of Guatemala and presently a politician who is not publicly active. These girls are fairly well known in Guatemala and are related to the wife of Carlos Simons, anti-Communist leader now in exile. The girls are, in my opinion, definitely on the anti-Communist, anti-Government side, and they are young, extroverts, pleasant, and probably would think nothing of telling their father or other oppositionists of persons visiting the Army and Air Attaches' offices.

4. The fourth floor (referred to locally as the third) houses the Ambassador and the Political Section of the Embassy, the Embassy and Station file rooms (semi-combined), telephone switchboard, and a guard's office (combined). The elevator door opens into an area used as a reception room for all persons having business on that floor. The switchboard operator and guard occupy a glass-enclosed temporary type room next to the elevator door. The switchboard is in the process of being moved to a lower floor, which will make that area, after proposed alterations, suitable for the Embassy stenographer who has already arrived at the post. Other rooms on the floor all enter into the above-mentioned reception room. The other rooms consist of: 1. [ ] (one room), next to the Station file room (which, as stated, is semi-combined with the Embassy file room). 2. Former office of the First Secretary, who was recently moved to the second floor as officer in charge of the Economic Section, and now occupied by the mentioned clerk-stenographer who will move to the present switchboard-guard room. 3. Ambassador's secretary and another Embassy clerk-stenographer. 4. Ambassador. 5. Counselor of Embassy. 6. Second Secretary and clerk-stenographer who types his work. The Station file room is a relatively small area and crowded into it are [ ] It is impossible for any other person to work in that room, and the present conditions are not satisfactory, but we may find that we have no alternative but to keep them working under such conditions. The present occupancy of one small room by [ ]

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is not satisfactory, but we may find it necessary to continue under these circumstances. The adjoining room, No. 2 above, will be insisted upon for our use, and it is my present intention to put [ ] therein or acquire space for one of them in the area now occupied by the Army Attache on the fifth floor or on the third floor, now completely occupied by the USIA. With the removal of the switchboard to a lower floor, the fourth floor will be the only floor not occupied by a Guatemalan. [ ]

5. The third floor (referred to locally as the second) is wholly occupied by the USIA. The second floor is occupied by the Economic Section, including an Agricultural Attache, the Administrative Officer, Disbursing Officer, Messengers office (small), and will house the switchboard and guard when the switchboard is removed from the fourth floor.

6. The ground floor is occupied by the Cultural Section and partially by the USIA which distributes on that floor white propaganda, booklets, etc., to the public on request and has a room in which there is kept a large number of racks holding cans of photographic film for distribution for public showings by locally employed USIA personnel. A locally employed receptionist maintains a desk on the ground floor and she handles all visitors who desire to call on Embassy officers. She telephonically notifies the officer of the presence of a visitor and receives his permission for the person to go to a higher floor. No pass system is employed.

7. The Embassy building is considered relatively secure from any possible forced entry. Heavy steel grills have been installed at the elevator entrance on each floor, and a heavy steel grill is located at the entrance to the stairway on the ground floor. These grills are locked with padlocks with the padlocks on the grills to each elevator entrance on the inside not the elevator side of the grill. The padlock to the grill on the ground floor at the stairway entrance is on the inside of the stairway. It would be fairly difficult for any person or group of persons to force their entrance. The Marine guard on duty at all hours of the day and night carries a 45 calibre automatic pistol. [ ]

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night hours [

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[  
combined file room, can be entered in the daytime only through ] , part of the  
the mentioned door to the combined file room or through a door  
leading from the office occupied [ ] ]

8. By separate memorandum on the subject of "Personnel--  
Guatemala" it is proposed that State<sup>58</sup> furnish the services  
of an additional clerk-stenographer, GS-5. As yet, it is not  
known what arrangements can be made for space for an additional  
clerk-stenographer, but I have confidence that the Ambassador  
will make appropriate arrangements at our request.

lfw/2 December 1953

cc: Chief of Station, Guatemala

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