

INFORMATION REPORT

CD NO. Case 9285

COUNTRY Guatemala

DATE DISTR. 16 Jan 52

SUBJECT Proposed Formation of Military Junta

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**SOURCE** Ranking executive of a US airline serving Central American countries. The following information was obtained from a prominent Guatemalan agriculturalist of Scandinavian descent who was brought to Guatemala by Ubico for the purpose of expanding and modernizing the country's agricultural economy. The executive states that he has found his informant usually reliable and well informed on political trends in Guatemala. The executive, himself, knows Paz Tejada quite well.

- Arbenz plans the formation of a Military Junta, headed by Carlos Paz Tejada, which will take over the Guatemalan Government while Arbenz is undergoing extensive medical treatment in the US.
- Arbenz is seriously ill and must come to the US for medical treatment. According to law, the President of the National Assembly, Roberto Alvarado Fuentes, would become acting president during Arbenz' absence. Arbenz neither likes nor trusts Alvarado and is determined to prevent him from assuming the office. The formation of a Military Junta which will seize power on Arbenz' departure is the device which Arbenz has chosen to circumvent the provisions of the law.
- The first step toward the formation of the Junta was the removal of Paz Tejada from his cabinet post of Minister of Communications and Public Works. This was done during early January 1952. Paz was returned to active duty with the army and became chief of the Carretera del Atlantico, a military engineering project concerned with building a road from Puerto Barrios to Guatemala City. While ostensibly heading that project, Paz will work in close liaison with other army leaders and will mature plans for seizing the government as soon as Arbenz leaves the country.
- Inasmuch as Roberto Alvarado Fuentes is an avowed Communist, whereas Paz Tejada is generally considered to be a conservative rightist, Arbenz' act in choosing Paz as his successor is definitely encouraging to those of us who deplored the spread of Communism in Guatemala and its apparent influence on the policies of the Arbenz government. Paz Tejada is extremely popular with the great majority of the officers of the Guatemalan Army, as well as with the conservative business element, and it is possible that he will be able to rally sufficient support to make his seizure of the government effective. On the other hand, he is quite young for the position and his youth may well arouse the jealousy of some of the older military men. Consequently, it is by no means certain that he can bring off a successful coup even with Arbenz' connivance. In any event, let us hope that rumors of the impending coup do not reach dissident elements which might decide that Paz should share the fate of Col Arana.

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