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COUNTRY El Salvador

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SUBJECT Military Strength of Col. Humberto Villalta

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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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1. On 4 February 1949, Roberto Arbizu Bosque, who had been acting as Major Humberto Villalta's go-between with the Villalta partisans in the Salvadoran army, stated that Villalta could effectively count on the support of seventy per cent of the young army officers. This bloc comprises the Cavalry Regiment and some officers of the 1st and 2nd Infantry Regiments. The garrisons at Santa Ana, San Miguel, Cojutepeque, and San Vicente were also described as pro-Villalta.*
2. On 5 February Carlos Castillo Ibarra, Nicaraguan revolutionary who was in El Salvador at that time, informed Villalta that President Arevalo of Guatemala had offered whatever funds, arms or other aid he might need. Castillo Ibarra conveyed the offer through Sra. Mila Barrientos, with whom Villalta had stayed in El Salvador. Villalta is said to have replied that the offer "was understood", which Castillo Ibarra construed to be a brush-off. Villalta did, however, consult his "secret council", whom Sra. Barrientos revealed to include Dr. Manuel Antonio Mendoza, Dr. Julio Eduardo Jimenez Castillo, and Dr. Obedio Velasquez, and some unidentified army officers.
3. The secret council's verdict to Villalta was that, while aid from Arevalo might in itself be acceptable, Villalta should shun mediation by Castillo Ibarra because of the latter's close contact with Guatemalan Foreign Minister Munoz Meary, who is believed to be a Communist.
4. The Salvadoran governing junta also offered Villalta money to enable him and his family to leave the country to undergo medical treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.** Through Sra. Barrientos, Villalta begged his secret council to match the government offer, which he preferred not to be forced to accept. The council, however, advised that he accept the government money, and promised that it would attempt to procure supplementary funds for Villalta.

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* ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ Comment. This estimate of Villalta's strength is believed to be exaggerated, perhaps to spread favorable propaganda for him. According to Major Jose Alberto Funes, the 1st and 2nd Infantry Regiments and the police are loyal to the militarist group behind Osorio.

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** ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ Comment. Major Villalta has since departed for the United States.

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