

ER 88-0322X

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS

Routing Slip

	ACTION	INFO
1. D/OCA		X
2. DD/Legislation		X
3. DD/Senate Affairs		X
4. Ch/Senate Affairs		
5. DD/House Affairs	X	
6. Ch/House Affairs		
7. Admin Officer		
8. Executive Officer		
9. FOIA Officer		
10. Constituent Inquiries Officer		
11.		
12.		

STAT

*2008
Rep Hamilton*

SUSPENSE

3 FEB 88

Date

Action Officer:

STAT

Remarks:

*DLA 88-0827
EJ*



27 JAN 88

Name/Date

REF ID: A66000

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS

Routing Slip

	ACTION	INFO
1. D/OCA		X
2. DD/Legislation		X
3. DD/Senate Affairs		X
4. Ch/Senate Affairs		
5. DD/House Affairs	X	
6. Ch/House Affairs		
7. Admin Officer		
8. Executive Officer		
9. FOIA Officer		
10. Constituent Inquiries Officer		
11.		
12.		

SUSPENSE

7 FEB 68

Date

Action Officer:

STAT

Remarks:

EJ

[initials]

27 JAN 68

Name/Date

ROUTING SLIP


TO:

		ACTION	INFO	DATE	INITIAL
1	DCI		X		
2	DDCI		X		
3	EXDIR		X		
4	D/ICS				
5	DDI		X		
6	DDA				
7	DDO		X		
8	DDS&T				
9	Chm/NIC				
10	GC		X		
11	IG		X		
12	Compt				
13	D/OCA	X			
14	D/PAO				
15	D/PERS				
16	D/Ex Staff		X		
17	C/CATF/DO		X		
18	C/LA/DO		X		
19					
20					
21					
22					

SUSPENSE 3 Feb 88
Date

Remarks D/OCA to respond over his signature.

STAT


Executive Secretary
27 Jan 88

Date

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January 25, 1988

OCA FILE Rep Hamilton
AFAC
ACA HPSI

The Honorable William H. Webster
Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Director Webster:

I write concerning a current trial before the Inter-American Court on Human Rights. A New York Times article of January 19, 1988 contains several allegations about CIA connections to the activities of death squads in Honduras. A copy of the article is attached.

I would like to know the accuracy of this article and specifically would like answers to the following questions:

- Is it accurate that a former Honduran Army sergeant, who has testified that he was a member of an army death squad was trained by the CIA as an interrogator?
- Is it accurate that Mr. Caballero tried to hide his death squad activities from the CIA, but that American Embassy officials in Honduras and the CIA were well aware of his activities?
- Was Lt. Col. Alexander Hernandez, until recently a leading official in the Honduran police, a former commander of army death squads in Honduras?
- Were American Embassy officials in Honduras, including the Chief of Station, aware of Lt. Col. Hernandez's death squad activities at the time or at any time afterward?
- Is it accurate that Lt. Col. Hernandez formerly commanded the 316th Battalion, an intelligence unit established by the CIA?

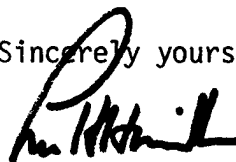
The Honorable William H. Webster
January 25, 1988
Page Two

- Did this unit conduct death squad activities?
- Was the CIA aware of such death squad activities?
- What was the role of the CIA in promotions which Lt. Col. Hernandez received?

I appreciate your responses to the several allegations stated or possibly implied by the New York Times article. I also would welcome any other comments you might wish to make on the subject of the CIA and links to death squads in Honduras.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours,



Lee H. Hamilton
Chairman
Subcommittee on Europe
and the Middle East

Attachment

cc: Honorable Louis Stokes
Chairman, Permanent Select
Committee on Intelligence

In Human Rights Court, Honduras Is First to Face Death Squad Trial

By JAMES LeMOYNE

Special to The New York Times

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica, Jan. 18 — In the first case ever tried by the Inter-American Court on Human Rights in which a Government has been put on trial, Honduras is being accused here of maintaining army death squads that caused the "disappearance" of civilians suspected of being leftists.

Honduras denies the charge, but two key witnesses involved in the case have been shot to death in Honduras in the last two weeks in what human rights advocates assert is an effort by members of the Honduran Army death squads to silence their critics.

Killings by Government death squads in Honduras since 1980 are well known to the Reagan Administration and to the Central Intelligence Agency, which trained Honduran soldiers who then worked in the death squads, according to several American officials and a former member of a Honduran death squad who said he was trained by the C.I.A.

Despite that knowledge, the Reagan Administration continues to contend that Honduras has an acceptable human rights record, continues to aid the Honduran police and army and appears to have done nothing to assist the trial under way here nor denounce the killings of witnesses in Honduras.

"I have never seen a case in which the United States Government is so deeply linked to the human rights abuses of a Government as in Honduras," Aryeh Neier, vice chairman of the New York-based human rights group, Americas Watch, said in an interview.

"The killings of witnesses in this trial is a direct threat to the integrity of the Inter-American system, which the United States has not in any way defended."

The Inter-American Court on Human Rights, which is hearing the case here and is expected to reach a verdict within the next two months, is a judicial arm of the Organization of American States, which is the leading inter-American political organization of which both the United States and Honduras are members.

Honduras has promised to fully and

Continued on Page A6, Column 1

Honduras Is First Country Tried for Death Squads

Continued From Page A1

immediately comply with a new Central American peace treaty that demands that Governments in the region respect and defend human rights.

The lead witness in the trial here, Miguel Angel Pavón, was shot to death with a friend four days ago in the town San Pedro Sula, a center of recent death squad killings in Honduras.

Mr. Pavón was a prominent figure in Honduras who headed the regional office of the Honduran Human Rights Commission, the most outspoken human rights group in the country and the target of regular criticisms by American and Honduran officials.

Two weeks ago, unknown assailants also fatally shot José Isaias Vilorio, a former Honduran Army sergeant who is believed to have been a death squad member and who was to have testified here today. The gunmen covered Mr. Vilorio with a rebel banner after killing him, a fact that Honduran officials say indicates leftist rebels carried out the murder.

Critics of the Government say, however, that the rebel banner was a crude attempt by an army death squad to shift the blame for the killing. The Honduran guerrillas have not carried out such a killing before and it seems unlikely they would shoot a witness in a trial that is so damaging to the Government and, indirectly, politically beneficial to them.

The court case here focuses on the disappearances in Honduras from 1981 to 1982 of two Honduran civilians, Saúl Godínez and Manfredo Velásquez, as well as two Costa Ricans, Yolanda Solís and Francisco Fairen Garbí. The families of the four disappeared civilians contend that army death squads captured and killed them, a charge the Honduran Government denies.

But there appears to be considerable circumstantial evidence that the four were captured and killed by the Honduran military and the weight of evidence in the trial here so far appears to be strongly against the Government.

Soiled by Terrorism

While the case formally deals only with the four missing persons named in the trial, it is being treated by diplomats and judges as of far greater symbolic significance. In effect, the trial is the first public effort by the Organization of American States to condemn the activities of Government death squads throughout Latin America.

The four people in the case here appear to be among an estimated 140

The case is a way to condemn the disappearance of civilians.

civilians killed by army death squads in Honduras from 1980 to the present. Those 140 civilians are a small fraction of the tens of thousands who have been captured, tortured and killed without trial by the armies of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, El Salvador and Guatemala, among other offenders, in the wave of terrorism that has soiled Latin America in the last two decades.

A former Honduran Army sergeant, Florencio Caballero, testified in earlier proceedings in the trial here that he was a member of an army death squad. He then detailed his involvement in interrogating civilians captured by army death squads. He said the prisoners were all killed.

Mr. Caballero said he was trained by the C.I.A. to be an interrogator and he has given convincing details to back that assertion, which American officials concede is true. Mr. Caballero said in an interview last year that he tried to hide his death squad activities from his C.I.A. advisers in Honduras, but American officials say the C.I.A.

and the American Embassy in Honduras were well aware of the slayings.

Despite that fact, the Reagan Administration has annually asserted that the Honduran Government is improving its human rights performance. Despite recent killings in the last year, Secretary of State George P. Shultz told Congress that Honduras has an acceptable human rights record once again — thereby approving new police assistance for Honduras.

That approval comes despite the fact that until recently a leading official in the Honduran police was an army officer well known to the American Embassy as the former commander of army death squads, according to three American officials and two Honduran soldiers.

The army officer in question is Lieut. Col. Alexander Hernández, who has denied the charges against him. But American officials and Honduran military sources said Mr. Hernández formerly commanded the 316th Battalion, an intelligence unit established by the C.I.A. that ran several death squads.

Despite such accusations Mr. Hernández has regularly been given top jobs in the army and was recently promoted to lieutenant colonel by President José Azcona Hoyo of Honduras, who two days ago in Costa Rica promised to uphold the new regional peace treaty calling for full respect of human rights.

The Honorable Lee H. Hamilton
Chairman
Subcommittee on East Europe and the
Middle East
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Director has asked me to respond to your letter of 25 January 1988 regarding allegations about CIA connections to death squads in Honduras.

As you are aware, the House Intelligence Committee conducted an extensive investigation of CIA's alleged role in these activities in 1985. The Committee focused on whether there was any evidence of wrongdoing or knowledge of abuse of human rights. We provided all available information to the Committee at the time of their inquiry.

While I believe you can obtain the necessary information relevant to your inquiry by contacting the House Intelligence Committee directly, the Agency is willing to make available knowledgeable officials who can answer your questions directly. Please let me know whether you wish to obtain such a briefing.

Sincerely,

John L. Helgerson

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