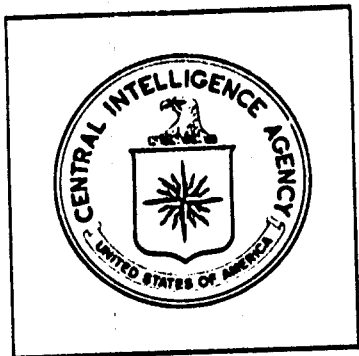


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Chile: Junta Solidarity


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Junta solidarity has received an important boost from General Gustavo Leigh, chief of the air force and a junta member. In recent well-publicized statements, Leigh has spoken out strongly against foreign criticism of the junta. He has stressed unity and underlined the air force's backing of the regime's policies. Leigh seems determined not only to answer Chile's critics abroad, but to demonstrate to President Pinochet the important role other junta members must play.

Leigh began his campaign earlier this month on his return to Santiago from a conference of hemispheric air force commanders in Montevideo. The general told the Chilean press that current US policy would drive the Latins together in a way Simon Bolivar, South America's legendary liberator, only "dreamed of." Leigh continued his offensive three days later on the occasion of the anniversary of the Chilean air force. Referring to recent criticism of the junta, he declared that "Chile is concerned less by its enemies than by its friends, and the blindness, weakness, and incomprehension of those who should be our friends, but are not interested enough to learn the truth about the Chilean situation."

He said his service was firmly behind the recent measures banning all remaining political parties and extending the state of siege. There was little doubt Leigh was directing his remarks to the President when he stated, "the Chilean air force, joined with its sister services, emphasizes the unrenounceable aim of maintaining the institutional government, because this is a government of the armed forces as a whole."

Leigh was making the point that not only was armed forces unity essential, but that Pinochet cannot afford to ignore his colleagues. The President's tendency to do just that has been the cause of recurring frictions among junta members.

Leigh continued the tough talk early this week in Asuncion, where he addressed the Latin American Anti-Communist Congress. 


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