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HONDURAN GOVERNMENT ASKS US AID AGAINST COMMUNIST THREAT

I. The Honduran government on 23 May informed US embassy it is unable to guarantee lives and properties of nationals and foreigners against "the imminent threat of international Communism." The Honduran note said in part that

A. "The government asks, supported by the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro, cooperation of the United States in facing dangers which threatens the Republic" (see attachment on Rio treaty)

B. Specifically, Honduras requested the United States to:

1. Dispatch two warships to stand off the threatened ports of Puerto Cortes, Tela, and La Ceiba (on the strike bound north coast) in readiness for any emergency.

2. Detain ships reported bringing additional arms shipments to Guatemala from the Orbit.

II. US Ambassador Willauer endorsed Honduras' two specific requests. Honduran government evidently feels Communist threat

is both internal and from neighboring Guatemala.

A. Internally--Communist agitation has prevented settlement of 35,000-worker general strike paralyzing north coast region for past three weeks.

1. Communist target is control of two major American owned fruit companies and at least five other businesses.

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- a. Overt strike leaders are under pressure from hidden Communists who appear to be the real leaders.
 - b. Communists are attempting to sabotage one near settlement reached by non-Communist strike leaders with Standard Fruit Company.
 - c. Honduran Communist Party reported about to be organized in Progreso, stronghold of strikers.
2. The Communists appear to oppose any settlement with the United Fruit Company, largest struck firm, as long as government is third party in negotiations.
 3. Strikers becoming defiant of the government and said to be armed.
 - a. Hitherto the strikers well disciplined and avoiding violence, but ~~situation~~ situation potentially explosive.
 - b. The government probably could not enforce martial law.
 4. Ambassador Willauer believes Communist aim is to provoke strong government intervention for subsequent propaganda exploitation.

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- B. Hondurans fear strikers may get Guatemalan help.
 - 1. Arms reaching Guatemala on 15 May by SS Alfhem has alarmed Hondurans.
 - a. Guatemalan troops reported at border by Hondurans
 - 1. Guatemala gives some confirmation of move by statement its troops are pursuing would be saboteurs of munitions train from Puerto Barrios, near Honduran border.
 - 2. But overt Guatemalan invasion unlikely;
 - b. Greater danger is Guatemala's increased capacity to arm Honduran strikers.
 - 1. Weapons in hands of Honduran strikers prior to 15 May were reportedly Guatemalan.

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