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COUNTRY Ecuador

DATE DISTR. 4 Feb 1949

SUBJECT Control of the Vencedores Infantry Regiment

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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.



1. On 14 January 1949, Manuel Diaz Granados, Ecuadoran Minister of National Defense, discussed with President (Cato Plaza Lasso the feasibility of transferring the Vencedores Infantry Regiment from Quito or disbanding it. He recommended one of these two courses because of the dangerous character of the Regiment (cf. [redacted]) and its armed strength. Diaz urged that the Regiment be disbanded at once with the help of the Quito Tank Squadron (Azuaq Mechanized Squadron), but the President recommended that it merely be transferred from the city.
2. On 15 January, Diaz alerted the Tank Squadron and planned to inform the Vencedores Regiment of its transfer to Latacunga. Action was delayed, however, because word was received that the Regiment would contest any attempt to move it. It was also feared that the noncommissioned officers and soldiers of the Tank Squadron would refuse to take action against their equals in the Vencedores Regiment, after having cooperated with them in an attempt to secure better salaries and living conditions early in January.
3. Captain Reinaldo Varea, Commander of the Tank Squadron, was notified on 16 January at 6:30 p.m. by the Commander of the First Division (formerly Military Zone No. 1), Lt. Colonel Bustamante, that the Vencedores were expected to attack the government that night, possibly in support of Colonel Carlos Manchano. Varea said that he could rally his officers immediately, but that he could not depend on all the officers and men to support an attack against the Vencedores. By 8:30 that evening the Tank Squadron was alerted and ready for action. Varea issued orders that the Tank Squadron should be in readiness for an attack expected momentarily from the Vencedores and that if the Vencedores did not strike before midnight, the Tank Squadron should take the initiative and disarm them. At the same time, Colonel Bustamante reported to the Minister of National Defense that the Tank Squadron was prepared as ordered, and they both informed the Vice President, Manuel Sotomayor y Luna. Sotomayor announced that he, personally, would attempt to dissuade the Vencedores from taking any action, but first he reported to the President, who had sought refuge across the street from his home with a Dr. Valdivieso. President Plaza made the following statement to Sotomayor: "I hope that the Vencedores attack tonight, but if they do not, I do not want any unit to attack them since that could be unconstitutional. If nothing occurs tonight, I will go to the barracks of the Vencedores tomorrow, personally, in the

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company of several officers and will order the arrest of the instigators of this revolt."

4. Because of President Plaza's attitude, the plans to transfer the Vencedores have been temporarily discarded. He is reported to have told the Minister of National Defense that he is reasonably certain of the existence of a pact among all the noncommissioned officers and soldiers in Quito and that it would be extremely embarrassing to the government if the Tank Squadron refused to take action against the Vencedores.
5. Other than the transfer of certain officers and enlisted men to jungle outposts, no action has been taken against the Regiment as a whole, which still is in possession of its full complement of arms and ammunition. Two companies, one of infantry and the other of engineers, have been moved to Quito from nearby garrisons as a precautionary measure. These troops were scheduled to be garrisoned at the Tank Barracks.
6. Although the loyalty of the National Police (Guardia Civil) in Quito is not assured, the director of its training school, Major Efrain Paredes, was alerted to the possibility of a revolt by the Vencedores. Orders were issued that if the revolt should take place, members of the police school at San Vicente, which is located near the Vencedores barracks, should hold the Vencedores in check until reinforcements arrived from Quito.

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Comment. In the opinion of a well-placed individual, the revolt of 13 January (cf. [redacted] did not take place because the minister of National Defense seized some of the ringleaders on that day. This person added that the situation among the troops throughout the country is such that if one unit should declare itself in favor of Mancheno, the Army would be split and the consequences unforeseeable.)

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