

Top Salvador Police Official Said to Be a C.I.A. Informant

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WASHINGTON, March 21 — The head of El Salvador's Treasury police has been a paid informant for the Central Intelligence Agency since the late 1970's, according to American officials.

The Treasury police have long been considered the least disciplined and most brutal of the Salvadoran security forces and some of the members have been linked to death squad activities by the Reagan Administration.

The American officials, who are familiar with C.I.A. activities in El Salvador, said that the Treasury police chief, Col. Nicolás Carranza, had received more than \$90,000 a year from the C.I.A. as an informant for the last five or six years.

A senior officer of the Treasury police, their head of intelligence, Maj. José Ricardo Pozo, was removed from his job late last year after the Reagan Administration pressed the Salvadoran Government to take action against security officers, including Major Pozo, who were linked to the death squads, according to State Department officials. The American officials maintained, however, that there was no credible evidence Colonel Carranza was personally involved with the death squads.

In visits to El Salvador at the time of Major Pozo's dismissal, according to Administration officials, Vice President Bush and other senior United States officials told Salvadoran leaders that military commanders, including Colonel Carranza, should move aggressively against any colleagues involved in death squad activities to dispel the impression that the commanders tacitly condoned the groups.

Conduct Said to Have Improved

The State Department officials said today that since Colonel Carranza took command last year, the Treasury police had improved their conduct somewhat but remained a major source of human rights abuses.

A diplomat in El Salvador said today of the Treasury police, "That is still the organization that people would least like to be picked up by."

"We can't say the organization as a whole is involved with the death squads, but we did complain about some top officials, including Major

Pozo, and their subordinates," a high-ranking State Department official said.

Intelligence officials, while declining to talk about Colonel Carranza, said C.I.A. operations in El Salvador had not involved the agency directly or indirectly in sanctioning death squads.

A C.I.A. spokesman, George V. Lauder, refused to confirm or deny that Colonel Carranza had been an informant. Repeated efforts this week to reach Colonel Carranza by telephone were unsuccessful. Aides said he was out of his office and unavailable.

Lieut. Col. Ricardo Cienfuegos, the chief spokesman for the Salvadoran armed forces, said today that without proof of a connection between Colonel Carranza and the C.I.A. he could make no comment. "We are not going to keep answering these charges without proof," he said.

American officials said the use of Colonel Carranza as a paid informant was part of the C.I.A.'s effort to monitor military and political developments, including power struggles within the Salvadoran military. When he was recruited by the C.I.A. in the late 1970's, Colonel Carranza was the Deputy Minister of Defense.

Before taking command of the Treasury police last May, Colonel Carranza worked at the Salvadoran telephone company and electric company in posts commonly occupied by ranking military officers.

Three Internal Security Forces

The Treasury police, originally established to deal with revenue violations, are one of three internal security forces in El Salvador. The others are the national police and the national guard. All three are active in efforts to counter guerrilla forces. Like the army, the three organizations report to the Minister of Defense.

John N. McMahon, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, in a recent appearance before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, testified that C.I.A. policy barred the use of agents or informants who were involved in assassinations, according to two members of the committee.

One of the Senators, who asked not to be identified, said that the C.I.A. had recently terminated its relationship with a Salvadoran security officer believed to be involved with the death squads even though the man had been a valuable source of information. That former informant, the Senator said, was not Colonel Carranza.

Information linking Colonel Carranza to the C.I.A. was initially provided by a former Salvadoran official who recently accused leading Salvadoran military officers and civilians of involvement in death squad activities. In an interview, the former Salvadoran official accurately identified the current C.I.A. station chief in El Salvador and named his two immediate predecessors. His information about Colonel Carranza's connection to the C.I.A. was confirmed by American officials familiar with the agency's operations in El Salvador.

Anonymity Requested

The former official's accusations about the death squad links of Salvadoran officers and civilians could not be independently confirmed.

The former Salvadoran official, who was promised \$50,000 by a group of critics of Reagan Administration policies in Latin America if he would speak out, has asked to remain anonymous for fear or reprisals. He has already received \$29,500 of the \$50,000.

American officials said it was common for the C.I.A. to recruit and pay senior military officers in foreign countries to provide information and to further American interests. Many of these informants, the officials said, are involved on their own in activities that the C.I.A. does not necessarily support or condone. "You can't always do business with honorable people," one former intelligence officer said. He added, "In such cases, the less you know, the better it is."

This gray area was illustrated two years ago when the former head of Mexico's national police was charged in San Diego with directing a stolen car ring that operated in southern California. Intelligence officials said the man had been a key C.I.A. informant in Mexico.

In an interview broadcast by CBS News tonight, the former Salvadoran official repeated his assertion that Colonel Carranza worked for the C.I.A. and was involved with the death squads.

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