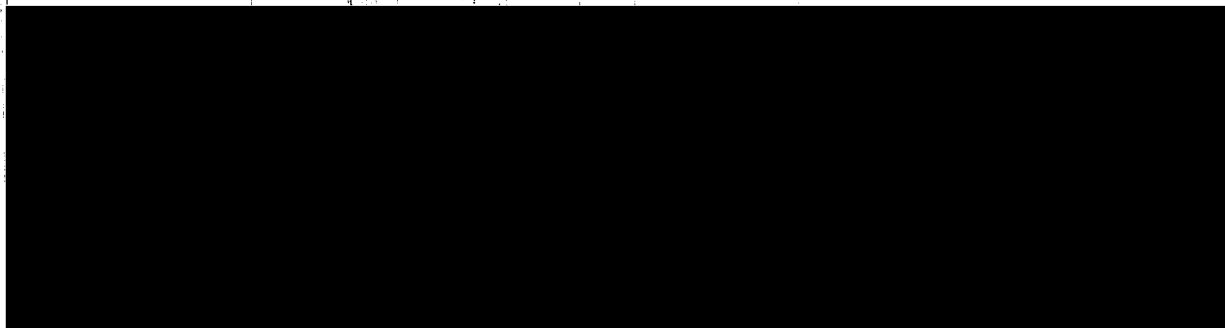
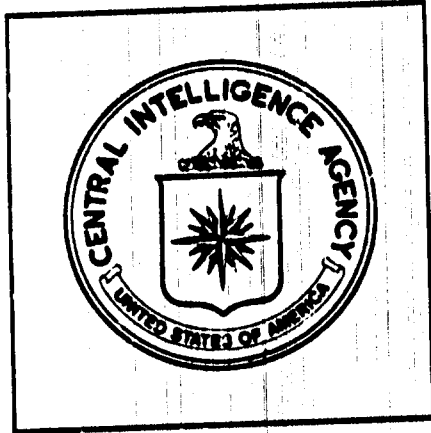


The overall exemptions for this document are (b)(1) and (b)(3).

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CI SNWE 76-094
No. 0136-76
May 12, 1976

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WESTERN EUROPE - CANADA - INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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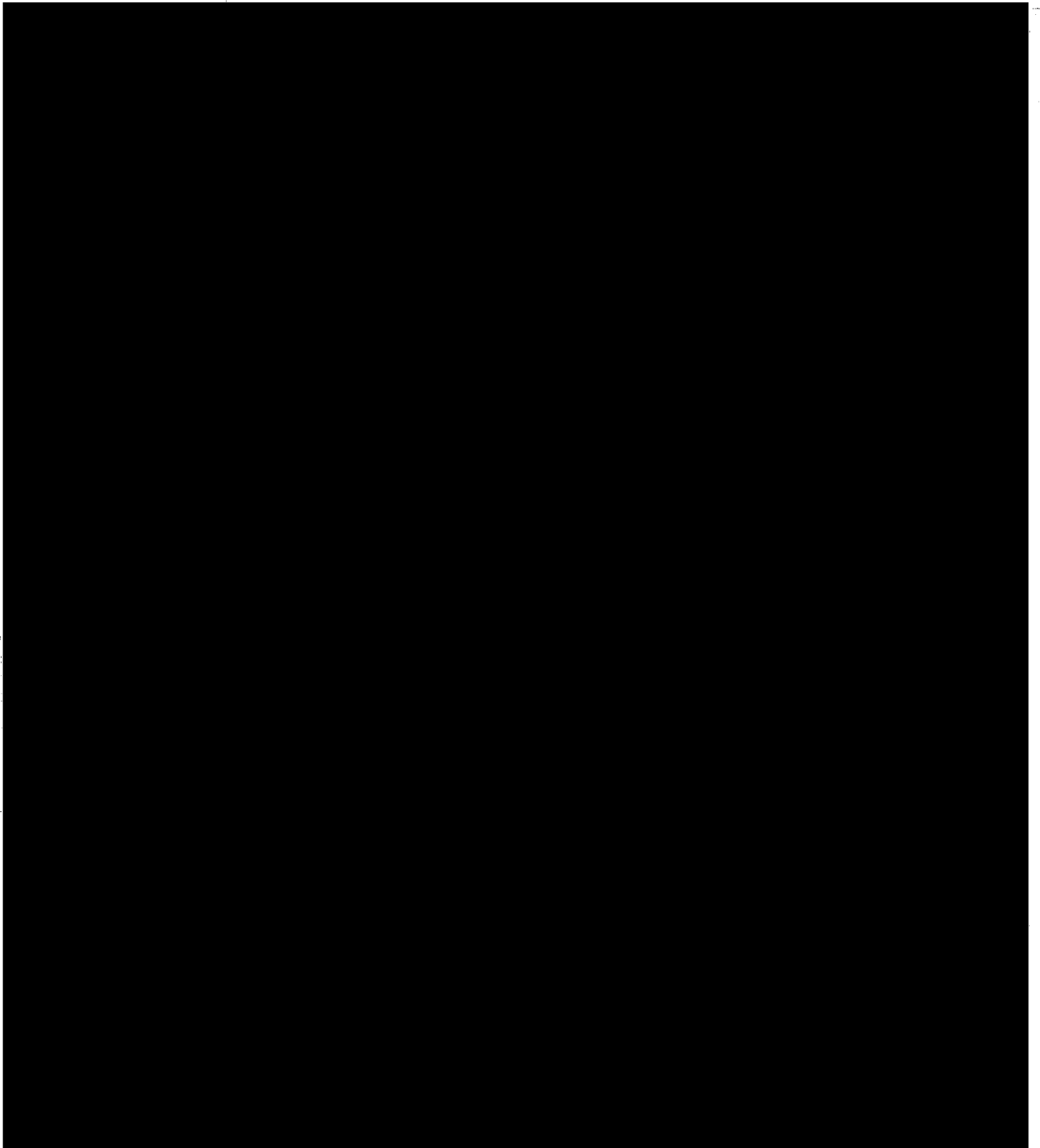
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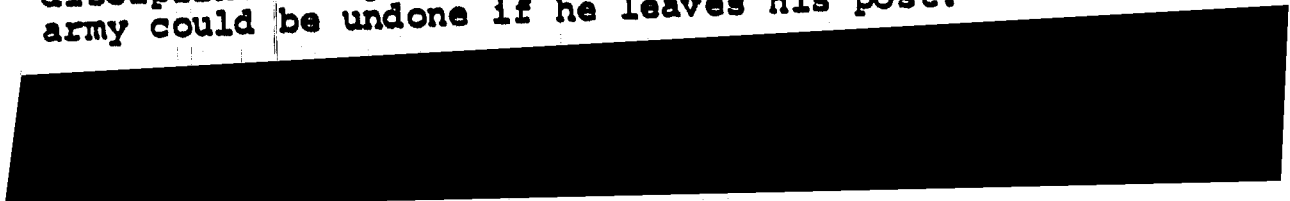
Portuguese Socialist Party Supports
General Eanes for President

With the announcement of support today by Socialist Party leader Mario Soares, Army Chief of Staff General Ramalho Eanes has now emerged as the clear front-runner in the presidential election on June 27. Eanes is assured of the backing of the three major democratic parties as well as most of the operational military, but he may yet face a stiff challenge from left-leaning Prime Minister Pinheiro de Azevedo.

In announcing the Socialist's endorsement of Eanes, Soares said that although both the Popular Democrats and the Social Democratic Center Party were also backing the general, the Socialist Party had reached no agreement with either group and still intended to form a minority government. Soares also denied having extracted any promise from Eanes to back this move in exchange for his party's support.

Eanes in fact still has not declared himself a candidate. He has delayed announcing in order to sound out the views of military colleagues concerning his candidacy. He reportedly has succeeded in obtaining the solid support of key officers in both the army and air force and is expected to make a formal announcement by this weekend.

Eanes has been reluctant to give up his present powerful position and his military career for the vagaries of elected office. He has expressed concern that efforts over the past few months to restore discipline and purge Communist sympathizers from the army could be undone if he leaves his post.



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Meanwhile, Prime Minister Azevedo issued a communique on Monday refuting press stories saying that he is supporting Eanes. The communique, rejecting the idea of a single military candidate, indicated that Azevedo would probably announce his own candidacy within a few days.

An electoral confrontation between Eanes and Azevedo, a navy admiral, carries with it some risk of splitting the armed forces, but it avoids the problem of having only one viable candidate. Both military and civilian leaders have been concerned that the presidential election would appear undemocratic if a military candidate ran unopposed.

Azevedo's challenge must be taken seriously in light of a recent opinion poll which showed him to be much better known than Eanes, who has preferred to work quietly behind the scenes. With Eanes imposing array of military and party support, however, he has a good chance of overcoming this disadvantage between now and the election.

The Communist Party has yet to endorse any candidate and might find Azevedo preferable to Eanes, although President Costa Gomes is probably their first choice within the military. Open Communist support for any candidate, however, would be more of a detriment than an advantage.

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