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MICROFILMED

EL SALVADOR

MICRO ONLY

José Guillermo GARCIA Merino  
(Phonetic: garSEEah)

Minister of Defense and  
Public Security (since  
October 1979)

Addressed as:  
Mr. Minister



Col. José García is one of the most popular and intelligent officers in the Salvadoran Army. Conservative in orientation, he was considered by the military as a possible choice for president during the mid-1970s. During 1979 he may have been involved in several plots to overthrow President Carlos Humberto Romero

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At that time he was commander of the Department of San Vicente, a position he had held since July 1978.

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García is anti-Communist and friendly toward the United States. He is the strongman in the government, and its members, including President José Napoleón Duarte, defer to him on crucial issues. Except in certain visible and publicized cases, García has not used his influence to address the question of the excesses committed by the extreme right in El Salvador. In this regard he is representative of the mainstream of the officer corps, whose primary concern is the destruction of the insurgency. He accepts the grim reality that some innocent people will be harmed in the attempt to attain that goal.

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After enlisting in 1956, García rose rapidly through the Army ranks. He attended the War College in Mexico during 1966-70 and took an orientation tour of the Panama Canal Zone in 1963. García is married and has four daughters. He will be 48 on 25 June.

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