

TELEGRAM

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FROM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA ~~CLASSIFIED FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~ 6639

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, HO
SUBJECT: PROPOSED LETTER CONCERNING HONDURAS TO THE NEW YORK TIMES

ACTION: SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO: AMEMBASSY BELIZE
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN
USMISSION USUN NY

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1. ~~XX~~ I request the Department's permission to send the following letter to the editor of the New York Times.

BEGIN PROPOSED TEXT:

AMB
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Mr. White's piece on Central America (NYT magazine, July 18) distorts/beyond recognition the image of democratic Honduras and our policies here. ~~His article suggests~~ His article suggests that Honduras has an unjust political system backed with our blessing by a repressive military establishment. He also implies that human rights and press freedoms are

DRAFTED BY: AMB:JDNegroponete:kjl	DRAFTING DATE 8-9-82	TEL. EXT. 211	CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY: AMB:JDNegroponete
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CLEARANCES:

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OPTIONAL FORM 153
(Formerly FS-413)
January 1975
Dept. of State

50153-101

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
() Release () Excise () Deny () Declassify
Date 6/2/98 Exemption

[better observed in neighboring Nicaragua. The facts are
that Honduras has a freely elected ^{civilian} ~~military~~/government
and liberal democratic institutions, including a free
and privately owned radio, press and television.
Honduras can also be proud of its vigorous labor move-
ment, considered a model in the region, and of its land
reform program whose origins date back more than twenty
years. The United States, continuing a policy established
by the previous administration, fully supports Honduras'
commitment to this democratic and pluralistic process.

Honduras' increasingly professional armed forces are
dedicated to defending the sovereignty and territorial
integrity of the country; and they are publicly committed
to civilian constitutional rule. Neighboring Nicaragua
has an army more than twice the size of Honduras' and a
stated intention to double the figure yet again, far
beyond any plausible defensive need. Honduras is also
concerned by the turbulence in neighboring El Salvador
and Guatemala. Faced with this difficult situation,
Honduras, as a traditional friend, has quite under-
standably asked for some additional U.S. military
assistance. We have responded positively with modest
increases. But there are no United States Air ~~XXXXXX~~
Force officers flying helicopter missions as Mr. White
[so incorrectly alleges and the since-departed Special

Forces personnel to whom Mr. White refers emphasized training in the interdiction of arms and other supplies transiting from Nicaragua to El Salvador guerrillas in violation of Honduran sovereignty. To put our military effort here in perspective, your readers will be interested in knowing that ~~at~~ at any given time there may be between thirty and fifty United States military personnel on temporary training duty in Honduras as compared to an estimated 2000 Cuban personnel engaged in military and security activities in Nicaragua. Also, our current AID program, some five times the cost of U.S. military assistance here, reflects the United States' longstanding commitment to Honduras' economic development.

Finally, Mr. White is completely wrong in stating that Honduran troops have begun fighting guerrillas in El Salvador. The truth of the matter is that Honduran forces have ~~completely conformed with the provisions of the 1960 Peace Treaty with El Salvador~~ periodically patrolled areas which are still in dispute between the two countries. These activities have been completely consistent with the principle of Honduran self-defense and in no way signal a Honduran involvement in the Salvador fighting. To the contrary, it is Honduras which has been reacting to expanded operations by Salvadoran guerrillas in the Honduran-claimed territory.

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Honduras is/friendly democratic nation in an increasingly difficult position. It needs and deserves our sympathetic support and assistance. END PROPOSED TEXT.

2. Please advise.

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