

ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	EEB-00	AID-00	A-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	INL-00
	DODE-00	DS-00	VCI-00	DIAS-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	L-00	ARMY-00	MOFM-00	MOF-00	VCIE-00	NSAE-00	ISN-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-00	OIG-00	OMB-00	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	P-00	ISNE-00	SP-00	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	T-00
	ASDS-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00
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R 141910Z MAY 10  
 FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1671  
 INFO WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE  
 USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

RELEASED IN PART B1,1.4(B),1.4(D)
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C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 000133

Classification Extended on : 11/14/2012 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL ~ Authority: DSCG 11-1 ~ <input type="checkbox"/> Declassify on: 05/13/2035
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SIPDIS

**DECONTROLLED**

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/05/14  
 TAGS: PREL, SNAR, PGOV, PHUM, KCRM, ASEC, GT  
 SUBJECT: A/S Valenzuela Focuses on Rule of Law, Regional Issues in  
 May 2-3 Visit to Guatemala

REF: GUATEMALA 7; GUATEMALA 27; GUATEMALA 119

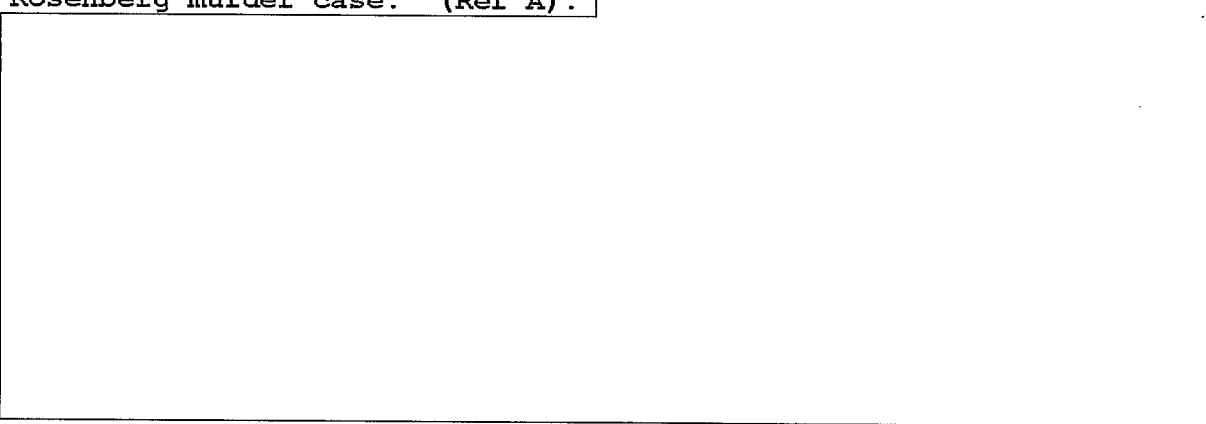
CLASSIFIED BY: Stephen McFarland, Ambassador, State, Executive;  
 REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

1. (SBU) Summary: In his May 2-3 visit to Guatemala, WHA Assistant Secretary Arturo Valenzuela told President Alvaro Colom that choosing a strong attorney general and normalizing relations with Honduras were top U.S. priorities. Valenzuela also discussed the possibility of extending the CICIG model (the UN Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala) to the region. Colom raised the new Arizona immigration law and the U.S. response. Valenzuela conferred separately with CICIG Commissioner Carlos Castresana about broadening and extending the investigative body's current mandate. Human-rights leaders with whom Valenzuela met endorsed the idea of expanding CICIG's mandate to tackle corruption. They also warned him that the 2011 presidential elections were shaping up to be the most contentious since the mid-1980s, a view echoed by a number of prominent opposition leaders and newspaper directors with whom Valenzuela also met. Finally, Valenzuela's visit to a USAID-sponsored agricultural cooperative in a remote corner of the country focused extensive media attention on U.S. efforts to enhance food security for Guatemala's large rural and indigenous population. The Assistant Secretary's visit underscored U.S.

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Donna M. DiPaolo, Senior Reviewer
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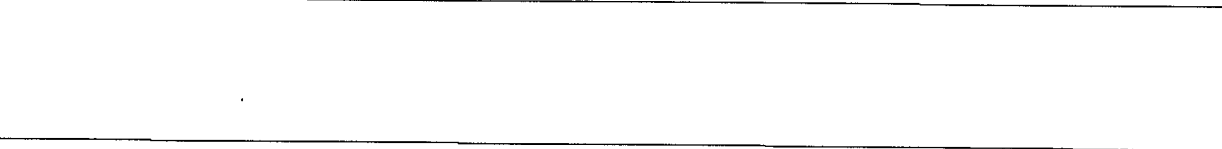
Meeting with Castresana

2. (C) CICIG Commissioner Carlos Castresana highlighted CICIG's accomplishments, putting over 130 high-profile criminals behind bars, and resolving politically charged investigations such as the Rosenberg murder case. (Ref A).



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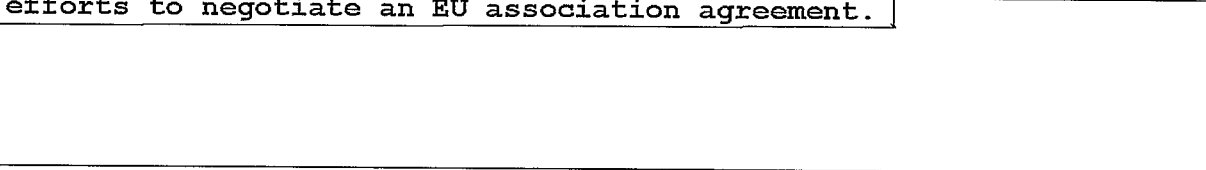
3. (C) Looking to the future, Castresana proposed the possible establishment of CICIG-like commissions in Honduras and El Salvador. Doing so would help address the influence of organized crime and gang-related violence, particularly as they move across borders. Castresana also floated the idea of broadening CICIG's current mandate in Guatemala, which is focused on investigating the existence of clandestine organizations within state institutions.



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President Alvaro Colom

4. (C) In a May 3 meeting, Assistant Secretary Arturo Valenzuela discussed with President Alvaro Colom and Foreign Minister Haroldo Rodas the need to normalize relations with Honduras, ways to enhance cooperation on regional security and justice issues, the importance of choosing a strong attorney general, and U.S. immigration reform efforts. Colom noted that the failure to normalize relations with Honduras is complicating the functioning of regional bodies such as the Central American Integration System and the Organization of American States, as well as regional efforts to negotiate an EU association agreement.



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5. (C) Colom and Valenzuela discussed the need for regional cooperation on security and justice issues, especially between Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, the so-called "Northern Triangle." Valenzuela asked Colom about extending the CICIG model in other countries to develop a cadre of experts with experience in investigating and successfully prosecuting high-profile cases.

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6. (C) To build on the successes achieved by CICIG, Valenzuela appealed to the president to appoint a strong attorney general.

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(Note: On May 3, a judge ordered the selection committee to repeat the final phase of the selection process for the new attorney general on grounds that the committee had failed to publicly discuss the integrity of each of the 29 original candidates, as required by law, before it voted to come up with its list of six finalists on April 19. Ref C. End note).

7. (C) Colom raised the Arizona immigration law, and Valenzuela reiterated President Obama's concerns,

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Valenzuela called on the president to ensure adequate resources are devoted to supporting local and regional efforts to improve the rule of law, especially given the fact that the United States is increasing its financial support in this regard under

Human Rights Leaders

8. (C) In a lunch hosted by the Ambassador, key Guatemalan human-rights leaders generally gave CICIG high marks but advocated its mandate should be expanded to include combating corruption.

[REDACTED]

emphasized the importance of investing in the country's painfully weak institutions, particularly the national civilian police (PNC).

[REDACTED] specifically urged the United States to help establish a regional police academy. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] decried the steady growth of violence in the country, and predicted bloodshed will only get worse as Guatemala approaches the 2011 elections. She alleged Guatemala's larger and more powerful parties, particularly those operating in parts of the country under the control of organized crime elements, would try to "physically eliminate" smaller parties, especially those on the left. [REDACTED] stressed the structural and poverty-related reasons that restricted indigenous peoples' access to justice. All agreed the elections promise to be

the most polarized since 1985.

Opposition and Private Sector on 2011 Elections

9. (C) A number of prominent opposition leaders, media directors, and businessmen stressed to Valenzuela that the 2011 elections were likely to be the most confrontational since the 1985 return to democracy. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] described the coming clash as one pitting the rich against poor. He noted that the ruling government National Unity for Hope (UNE) party consistently blames the country's poverty and social ills on the private sector's refusal to pay its fare share of taxes. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] agreed, noting the current Colom administration claims to speak for the poor. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] predicted the elections would be a "bloodletting" financed largely by narco-traffickers. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] complained that in certain

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Others at the dinner complained about the huge levels of mistrust that characterize the current political climate, the absence of political will to take on organized crime and corruption, and the frailty of government institutions. Despite this gloomy picture, most still saw some rays of hope: [redacted] noted that while the ongoing selection process for the new attorney general has been less than perfect, it has still been much more open than in the past. [redacted] agreed, noting that Guatemala's traditional opacity is slowly dissipating, [redacted]

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[redacted] praised the growing willingness of civil society to challenge the government. The Assistant Secretary encouraged them to nurture this sense of hope, observing that the most important ingredients in building a healthy and prosperous society are strong institutions, good people to lead them, and the exercise of political will.

#### Visit to Quiche

10. (U) Valenzuela accompanied the Ambassador and Janet Ballantyne, USAID Acting Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean, to a remote agricultural cooperative in the highland department of Quiche. Guatemala has the highest national levels of chronic malnutrition (43.4 percent) in the Western Hemisphere. Valenzuela's trip brought attention to how the USAID value chain model enhances food access for rural populations by assisting small-scale agricultural producers to increase their incomes and improve family quality of life. The USAID-sponsored project has helped the cooperative do this through the production and exportation of high-value vegetables, such as French green beans and snow peas, to international markets. The site visit generated front-page press coverage in Guatemala and also highlighted U.S. concern for Guatemala's indigenous peoples, which constitute roughly half of the country's total population.

11. (U) Assistant Secretary Valenzuela has cleared this cable.  
MCFARLAND

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