

The C.I.A.'s Cover Has Been Blown? Just Make Up Something About U.F.O.'s

By Stephen Kinzer

The State Department recently issued a collection of previously classified documents that shed new light on the Central Intelligence Agency's role in the June 1954 coup in Guatemala that ousted the president, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman. Mr. Arbenz had clashed with the United Fruit Company, which for many years exercised decisive influence in Guatemala, and the Eisenhower administration feared that he was leading his country toward Communism. The coup brought Col. Carlos Castillo Arenas to power and set off more than three decades of civil conflict and repression in which hundreds of thousands of Guatemalans were killed.

Here are excerpts from documents related to the coup plot, which was code-named PBSUCCESS.

Telegram from C.I.A. headquarters to a C.I.A. station, whose location remains classified, Jan. 26, 1952:

Hq. desires firm list top flight Communists whom new government would desire to eliminate immediately in event of successful anti-Communist coup.

Memorandum for the record, Sept. 18, 1953:

At 1500, 18 September 1953, a meeting was held at the office of [Allen W. Dulles, the Director of Central Intelligence] to discuss the present status of PBSUCCESS and to consider future plans for this operation.... Cabell [Gen. Charles P. Cabell, the agency's deputy director] stated that he concurred in approval of the general plan but felt that the budget estimate should be increased to \$3,000,000 to provide more adequately for contingencies. Mr. Dulles agreed.

Memorandum from COL J. C. King, chief of the Western Hemisphere division, C.I.A. Directorate of Operations, Sept. 25, 1953:

Tasks for Chief of Station, Guatemala

- a. Controlled penetration of the Communist Party.
- b. Controlled penetrations of the major labor unions.
- c. Controlled penetrations in the major anti-Communist organizations.
- d. Controlled penetrations in the armed forces, or controlled agents with access to current planning both in senior and junior officer groups.
- e. Controlled agents with access to high-level Guatemalan Government political propaganda planning....

The station will prepare a list of the 25 most dangerous Communists and pro-Communists and attempt to gather data re these targets which could be used for character assassination.... More pictures of comparisons of living conditions of the top Commies and the peons will be of special value.

Memorandum for the record, Oct. 29, 1953:

Station Guatemala has been directed to take the following actions:

1. Transmit all rumors re Arbenz officials, the Guatemalan Army, revolutionary activities and Communist activities.
2. Prepare a weekly "psychological barometer" report on local conditions.

3. Make a continuing study of morale factors among students, laborers, army officers, enlisted men, government officials, farm owners, and business and professional men....

Paramilitary Action: An initial shipment of approximately 15 tons of arms and ammunition is now ready for shipment from [DELETED] and subsequent transshipment to [Colonel Castillo Armas in] Nicaragua.... This material is intended for use by [Colonel Castillo Armas] in his Nicaraguan training center and to test facilities for clandestine introduction of arms into Guatemala.

Memorandum from C.I.A. headquarters, Nov. 5, 1953:

Station was instructed to mail "mourning cards" for 30 successive days to Arbenz and top Communist leaders. Cards were to mourn the purge or execution of various Communists in the world and to hint forthcoming doom to recipients.

Telegram from PBSUCCESS headquarters in Florida to C.I.A. headquarters, Jan. 30, 1954:

White Paper [issued by the Guatemalan government] has effectively exposed certain aspects of PBSUCCESS ... If possible, fabricate big human interest story, like flying saucers, birth sextuplets in remote area to take play away.

Memorandum for the record, March 2, 1954, from Colonel King:

At 1910 on 28 February, I picked [Pseudonym] up in my car at the corner of Massachusetts and Wisconsin. We drove for about an hour out River Road and I am certain were not observed. [Pseudonym] expressed his regrets for the compromise of the five paraphrased cables, and in a manner which appeared to be entirely sincere. I asked him how it was possible, with all of the security indoctrination which he had had, plus the great emphasis on secrecy based on all phases of PBSUCCESS, to have done such an unpardonable thing as to leave sensitive papers in a hotel room. He replied that he had no explanation, that it was a stupid, unpardonable thing to do, but that it was an act of thoughtlessness and carelessness.... It was agreed that for the next month [Pseudonym] will remain in Chicago. We discussed two general areas where he could bury himself after that date ■ Alaska and the Pacific Northwest ... He has never been in the Northwest and suggested as a possibility that he get a job until fall as a fire watcher on a mountain top where he would meet very few people.

Memorandum from PBSUCCESS headquarters to C.I.A. station in Guatemala, Apr. 28, 1954:

Consider it highly important to mobilize anti-Communist activities of the Catholic Church dignitaries and of Catholic lay organizations.... This could be done, for instance, by describing graphically how the local church would be turned into a meeting hall for the "Fighting Godless," how the reader's children would have to spend their time with the "Red Pioneers," how the pictures of Lenin, Stalin and Malenkov would replace the pictures of the Saints in every home, and the like.

Dispatch from PBSUCCESS headquarters to all PBSUCCESS stations, June 13, 1954:

Rumors, combining fact and fiction, which ought to be circulated, may include the following (not every rumor is applicable to every group of people and to every situation, select from the following suggestions whatever is suitable for given moment and audience):

A group of Soviet commissars, officers and political advisers, led by a member of the Moscow Politbureau, have landed. The government has issued an order devaluating the quetzal at the rate of 1:10. Use Your money immediately to buy food and durable goods.... In addition to military conscription, the Communists will introduce labor conscription. A decree is already being printed. All boys and girls 16 years old will be called for one year of labor duty in special camps, mainly for political indoctrination and to break the influence of family and church on the young people.... Food rationing is about to be introduced.... Arbenz has already left the country. His announcements from the National Palace are actually made by a double, provided by Soviet intelligence.... An educational reform is being prepared. There will be no longer any religious instruction at state expense, but on the contrary lessons in atheism, Soviet style.

Add rumors of your own, following the day-by-day changes in the situation.

Telegram from C.I.A. headquarters to PBSUCCESS headquarters, June 24, 1954:

We now prepared authorize bombing specific targets in [Guatemala City] area since you and [John E. Puerifoy, the American ambassador to Guatemala] feel this now the most effective move to achieve success. Targets should be selected with a view to having desired effect on army and regime morale with minimum political cost to [the United States].

Telegram from C.I.A. headquarters to PBSUCCESS headquarters, June 30, 1954:

Heartiest congratulations upon outcome developments past forty-eight hours. A great victory has been won.

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