HONDURAS

THE QUESTION OF MILITARY COOPERATION WITH THE HONDURAN REGIME AS AFFECTED BY THE UNITED STATES’ ATTITUDE TOWARD DICTATORSHIP

815.00/2-146: Airgram

The Ambassador in Honduras (Erwin) to the Secretary of State

CONFIDENTIAL

TEGUCIGALPA, February 1, 1948.

[Received February 6—11:22 a.m.]

A-23. General Tiburcio Carías Andino today completed 13 years of continuous service as President of Honduras. This is without precedent in Honduran history: with the exception of General Luis Bográn (1883-1891) no other Honduran President held power continuously for as long as 8 years, and the average tenure was scarcely 2 years. In the 112 years from the Declaration of Independence in 1821 to the accession of Carías in 1933, some 12 Presidents were overthrown by violence, several others were forced to resign under pressure, and one was murdered; various others were faced with rebellion (which is to say unsuccessful revolution) during their terms of office.

President Carías soon put an end to this chaos, although he never applied the death penalty to a political opponent. He has now been without effective internal opposition for several years and, aside from the possibility of death from assassination or natural causes, has a reasonably good chance of completing his tenure on December 31, 1948.

Honduras is one of the few countries on earth in a better position today than in 1933. President Carías has halved the national debt, stabilized the exchange value of the currency, and put the country on what is virtually a pay-as-you-go basis; even schoolteachers are paid promptly, and in cash rather than by means of the Government Warrants (I.O.U.'s) so often used during previous administrations. All this has been accomplished through the exercise of the old-fashioned orthodox virtues of hard work and frugality, without recourse to screwball economics. There is no income tax, nor are there any excessive taxes of any kind; only 22 percent of the national revenue is derived from import duties.

There is no unrest among the laboring classes. Monetary and real wages seem to be somewhat higher than in neighboring countries, and there is no unemployment. The well-to-do classes must have confi-
dence in President Carías and in his ability to install an eventual successor without major disorders, since Tegucigalpa is enjoying an unprecedented building boom. There is scarcely a block in the city where new houses are not being constructed or old ones remodeled; adobe is being replaced by reinforced concrete and stucco. The central part of Tegucigalpa now has an adequate system of underground sewers and is well-paved (for the first time since its foundation in 1578), and such improvements are being continued towards the outskirts.

In the international field, President Carías has attended strictly to his own business; he has crossed no frontiers, rattled no sabers, nor interfered in any way in the affairs of his neighbors. His attitude toward the United States has been fully cooperative at all times, and he broke relations with Germany by expelling its Chargé d’Affaires (Zinsser) several months before the attack on Pearl Harbor! Several years previously he had been wise enough to refuse permission for the establishment of a Japanese colony of alleged cotton growers in an area along the Gulf of Fonseca!

ERWIN

815.001 Carías Andino, Tiburcio/4-346

The Chargé in Honduras (Faust) to the Secretary of State

No. 2260

TEGUCIGALPA, April 3, 1946.

[Received April 11.]

SIR: With reference to the Department’s telegram No. 39 of March 13, 1946, 3 p. m., concerning its attitude toward the Carías regime, I have the honor to submit the following considerations in the hope that it may be reconsidered.

The Carías dictatorship is of the well-known personal type, entirely uncomplicated by Fascist “ideology” or Nazi metaphysics, and similar to numerous others which existed in Latin America long before Mussolini and Hitler were born. As Latin American dictatorships go, it is far better than most; a trifle less enlightened, perhaps, than some.

Since the Department cannot seriously believe that Carías has any totalitarian taint, its objection to him would appear to rest on two facts: (a) that he perpetuated himself in office by irregular means, and, (b) that he suppressed freedom of speech and other liberties by imprisoning his political opponents.

The changing of a Constitution to permit the reelection of a Chief of State is not uncommon in Latin American politics; according to the American newspapers, steps are now being taken along the same lines
even in the State of Georgia, U. S. A. The fact that Carías remained in office without a general election, merely by having a Constituent Assembly extend his term, is somewhat more serious, but is likewise not without precedent. Since this first happened in March 1936, it seems a bit late to object now. He will relinquish office on December 31, 1948.

It is unfortunately true that under the Carías regime citizens can be, and too frequently have been, arrested without proper judicial warrant and imprisoned for months and even years without open trial. But the number of such victims has been greatly exaggerated and it seems doubtful if there ever were more than 600 “political” prisoners in jail at any given moment. (The total population of Honduras is approximately 1,250,000.) As has been reported in various despatches in the past few months, most of the so-called “political” prisoners have been released, and even the most rabid oppositionists have been unable to supply a list of more than 80 claimed to be still under detention. (Since the Embassy has no facilities for ascertaining if all the persons whose names were supplied actually are in jail—or even if all of them really exist—it is obvious that the situation has improved materially.)

Honduran oppositionists now devote considerable lip service to “freedom”. But there was very little real freedom in Honduras between the Declaration of Independence in 1821 and the advent of Carías in 1933. Citizens were “free” to plant crops, raise cattle, or engage in business, but the fruits of their labors were frequently “requisitioned” by a guerilla chief in the name of some revolutionary movement or merely seized. Resistance often meant instant death...

Honduras could scarcely be described as a “going concern” when Carías assumed office in 1933; the Treasury was empty, and political chaos had generally prevailed during the previous 112 years. His amazing accomplishments were outlined in the Embassy’s A-23 of February 1, 1946 and need not be recapitulated here. In brief, he ended chaos in Honduras and the Department is aware that the measures he now takes are less harsh than those employed some years ago.

Recorded history has few examples of democracy developing directly from chaos; the usual sequence has been chaos, strong-man dictatorship, and then a gradual softening towards democracy. Since President Carías is at least moving in the same direction, and as nothing better is in sight, I would be derelict in my duty if I did not suggest that the Department reconsider the view expressed in its telegram under reference. President Carías is a great and patriotic Hon-
duran, entirely without ambitions beyond his own frontiers. He deserves more sympathy than has been given him up to now.

Respectfully yours, 

JOHN B. FAUST

Memorandum by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Caribbean and Central American Affairs (Newbegin) 9

WASHINGTON, June 3, 1946.

The Honduran Ambassador in a note dated May 28, 1946 10 requesting the Department's cooperation in obtaining AT-6's had posed a question which may make desirable a review of the Department's position with regard to two major policies which would appear to be, at least in part, incompatible, namely: (a) The withholding of arms and ammunition from the dictator countries in order that they may not be in a position to use them against their own people, thus perpetuating their regimes; and (b) The military cooperation with the other American Republics with a view to standardization of equipment and to a better and more unified defense of the Hemisphere.

The Honduran Ambassador in presenting his note (which pointed out that the Honduran Government had not only failed to obtain the permits but had been given no reason for their non-issuance) stated "off the record" that he had learned that the planes were being kept from Honduras for "political reasons".

General Considerations—

As regards the two policies under reference, the following points might be considered:

A. Factors making continuance of withholding of arms desirable:

1. This has been one of the most effective means of bringing our disapproval to the attention of the dictatorial regimes and of encouraging and reinforcing those local democratic elements which we should like to see succeed the present dictators.

2. Our record remains clear and we cannot be accused either by our own people or by the dictators' victims of supporting or making possible the continuance of dictatorships through supplying arms susceptible of use by a dictator against his own people.

3. We remain faithful to our general professions of the basic reasons for which we fought the war.

4. Should we supply arms to one of the dictators, we will be in a position of having to do likewise to the others.

5. Should the present policy be modified it would probably be in-

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9 Addressed to the Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs (Braden) and to the Director of the Office of American Republic Affairs (Briggs).
10 Not printed.
terpreted by the public in dictatorship countries as support for and approval of the dictators.

B. Factors Adversely Affecting Continuance of Policy of Withholding Arms:

1. Failure to supply equipment requested weakens and may nullify the military cooperation and standardization program. The question has already been raised in Central America of the utility to the receiving country of American military missions when equipment is withheld; and there is at least one example (Dominican Republic) of a country which having failed to receive arms from the U.S., sought and obtained them elsewhere.\(^\text{11}\)

2. Possibility of effectiveness of withholding programs being nullified by other powers. Even assuming British cooperation in withholding arms from any given country, we cannot count on similar cooperation from Russia which might supply arms either directly or through a third country such as Argentina.

3. Resentment resulting from failure to obtain arms would facilitate Russian infiltration and possible formation of anti-American blocs.

4. There is a striking discrepancy between the attitudes taken to date towards the American dictators and the Russian dictatorship. Notwithstanding obvious explanations for the discrepancy, our inconsistency exposes us to charges of hypocrisy and ulterior motives.

5. Our policy to date has not succeeded in bringing about the removal of any American dictator.

6. The program of military cooperation contemplates the supplying of equipment in accordance with the needs of each country and the contribution which it may make to continental defense, at the same time taking into consideration the necessity for preventing such countries from becoming a menace to their neighbors. In short, the program envisages a form of control and limitation although not total withholding, as is now the policy with regard to certain countries.

7. Such limited equipment as might be given to dictatorship countries under the program would not necessarily alter the ability of a dictator to perpetuate his regime. Most present American dictatorships already have sufficient arms to control their people unless there is a disaffection among the military elements. Additional equipment would not, therefore, materially affect the present situation.

**Specific Problem of Honduras**

When Ambassador Cáceres presented his request to Mr. Cochran on May 28, he was accompanied by Colonel Stewart, who is in charge of pilot training in Honduras. The latter states that were he to obtain six AT-6's he would ground nine other planes, including five Vultees. He emphasized that the sole reason for the request was to provide more suitable equipment for training purposes, pointing out that Honduras

\(^{11}\) For documentation on this subject, see pp. 816 ff.
already had sufficient equipment to take care adequately of any disturbances which might arise.\footnote{Charlé Faust, in a letter of May 14 to Acting Secretary Acheson, stressed this opinion: "Unless the United States is prepared to give real assistance in standardizing Honduran military equipment, the Mission might as well be withdrawn; obviously, it cannot do its work properly unless given the necessary tools. The Department's fear that Carías might strengthen his dictatorship if given modern equipment appears to be without basis. He already has virtually 100% control and does not need modern arms to defeat the sporadic attempts of oppositionist elements to overthrow his regime. His several thousand rifles of the type used by American forces in the First World War constitute far better equipment than any which his opponents are likely to obtain." (711.00/5-1446)\footnote{Gen. Anastasio Somoza, President of Nicaragua.}}

Should the Department reject the Honduran application, it would appear desirable to inform the Ambassador of the reasons therefor as was done in the case of the Dominican request for arms. Unfortunately, we would have greater difficulty in this instance in presenting as good an explanation since Carías (probably as a result of our present policy) has permitted the opposition press to function, has at long last released political prisoners and observed other democratic forms which might enable him to make, what would be on the face of it, a fairly effective reply.

Recommendation—

After considering the various factors involved it is recommended that the AT-6's be released to Honduras. However, although the specific request under consideration is not of outstanding importance in itself, it should be fully understood that acceding to it would probably involve a similar change in policy toward supplying arms to other dictatorship countries of the Hemisphere since it would be difficult to draw the line between Carías and, for example, his neighbor dictator, Somoza,\footnote{Addressed to the Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs (Braden) and to the Director of the Office of American Republic Affairs (Briggs).} or other more objectionable dictators.

Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Caribbean and Central American Affairs (Cochran)\footnote{Addressed to the Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs (Braden) and to the Director of the Office of American Republic Affairs (Briggs).}

WASHINGTON, June 3, 1946.

The Honduran memorandum expresses Honduras' interest in obtaining six AT-6 airplanes, and the Ambassador made it clear that he wanted a reply explaining why export licenses were refused (should they be refused). It is unfortunate that the issue is drawn in a case not clearly involving combat aircraft (experts can argue interminably as to whether an AT-6 is, or is not, a tactical plane). The request nevertheless poses the dilemma: which is to prevail, our
policy of arms standardization or our refusal to assist non-democratic régimes?

1. Should we hold that the arms standardization program is to prevail, there is no further point to our private diatribes against the dictators. If Honduras is to receive AT-6 planes, we must also make them available to Somoza in Nicaragua. To supply military equipment to either régime will not, at this late date, convince Carías or Somoza of our love; but it will serve to disillusion the peoples of both countries, and of others, as to the purity of our purposes, or the sincerity of our devotion to democratic principles.

Is Honduras a dictatorship? Less so, than the tyranny of Somoza. Some political prisoners have been released. The press is freer than a year ago. But it is still true that the people have not been called upon to elect a President since 1932. Similarly, the 1936 “elections” for a Constitutional Assembly (whose members later became the Chamber of Deputies under the new Constitution of that year) were uncontested by the “Liberal” (opposition) party; which also refused to vote in the 1942 congressional elections. Thus, the legislature is a rubber stamp, and there is no real freedom to criticize or to oppose the Carías régime. Carías has promised to retire in 1948 (so did Martínez in El Salvador, only to ignore this commitment). There is no legal and effective way for the people to turn out a government of which they disapprove. It cannot be seriously held that there is freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of organization or real freedom of the press.

It is unfortunate that Honduras should arise as the test case, because it has no history or tradition of democratic practice—on the contrary, its story is one of turbulence and selfish demagogues, resorting freely to revolution to attain power. Its peace has come from its dictator. But that peace has been the peace of oppression. And whether or not democracy is the answer to Honduras’ political problems, in the light of its political, economic, cultural and educational backwardness, it must be remembered that whatever we do in this case, we must also do in Nicaragua, where conditions are quite different and where there is a widespread and an organized demand for freedom.

2. Should we hold that “no aid to the dictators” is to be the over-riding consideration, we are true to the principles which made our country great. We are true to the postulates for which we said we were fighting in World Wars I and II. We are true to the hopes which so many oppressed peoples of the world have placed in us.

At the same time, we risk impairing the policy of standardization. Countries refused arms by us may obtain them elsewhere. They may refuse our military missions, and turn to other countries for them. We may split the hemisphere, and find ourselves with Argentine military men and arms in Nicaragua, Honduras, the Dominican Republic. But if it is true that democracy and peace are indivisible, we must stick to the line of the former, or our hopes for the latter will be illusory. And a hemisphere solidarity based on playing bedfellow with the arrant dictators, such as Trujillo and Somoza, is a patent fraud.

Continuance of the “no aid to dictators” policy may not prevent the tyrants from obtaining arms elsewhere. But it will avoid the shooting of Dominicans, Nicaraguans and Hondurans with equipment supplied by the United States.

Furthermore, nothing could so effectively drive the downtrodden masses of the hemisphere to turn to Russia, as our abandonment of them. To support the dictators is to deny our sympathy and our help to every liberal movement, to every cry for freedom. To support the dictators is not to deliver the masses of this continent to Communism by default; it is to force the peoples to turn to Russia as their only hope. That would really “split the hemisphere”.

It has been pointed out that our policy to date has not affected the removal of a single dictator. To that, I reply: the policy is young, and almost unknown; it has not yet been fully and publicly applied; but neither has it been ineffective—Somoza is badly worried, Trujillo is seriously alarmed, and Carías has freed his political prisoners, relaxed his hold on the press. Time and its effective application will make the policy even more efficacious. And to give planes to Honduras now is to abandon the policy upon its second test.

I note further that to refuse aid to Honduras parallels our publicly-announced policy in Europe, where we have suspended assistance to Poland because of that country’s failure to hold free elections; and where we have made our attitude quite clear in similar situations in Rumania, etc. Thus, consistency also counsels our continuing to refuse aid to the dictators in this hemisphere.

I do not see that those so-called realists who ever counsel expediency have accomplished much to prevent wars. At least, the injection of a little idealism and principle into our foreign policy can do no worse.

I recommend that the Honduran request be rejected, in the terms of the attached draft.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} Rafael L. Trujillo, President of the Dominican Republic.
\textsuperscript{18} Not printed.
To support this recommendation, I quote from Secretary Byrnes’ recent testimony on the arms standardization bill: he said that approval of the bill will be an indication . . . “That the United States desires to go forward with such collaboration subject to overriding considerations of our general foreign policy—particularly our support of the United Nations . . .”. He also said that activities under the bill will be governed by the basic objectives of our policy of . . . “assistance to our sister American nations . . . in progressively greater achievement of political, economic and cultural objectives of a democratic society.”

W[ILLIAM] P. C[OCHRAN, JR.]

The Secretary of State to the Honduran Ambassador (Cáceres)

The Secretary of State presents his compliments to His Excellency the Ambassador of Honduras and has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of his note of May 28, 1946, with regard to the desire of the Honduran Government to purchase six AT-6 airplanes, and requesting that export licenses be granted for this equipment.

It is regretted that the Government of the United States is not in a position to make these airplanes available to the Government of Honduras at this time.

WASHINGTON, June 17, 1946.

The Acting Secretary of State to the Honduran Ambassador (Cáceres)

WASHINGTON, August 9, 1946.

EXCELLENCY: I have the honor to refer to Your Excellency’s note of June 4, 1946 and to my acknowledgment dated June 20, 1946 concerning the desire of Your Excellency’s Government to obtain from the United States specified lists of material for the Honduran armed forces. . . .

The material requested in Your Excellency’s note comprises both arms and ammunition and supporting equipment which is non-military in character. This Government is not at this time in a position to supply the Honduran Government with the arms and ammunition requested. It is none the less suggested that some of the non-military equipment may be procured directly from the War Assets Administra-
tion, which is charged with the disposal of such material. As Your Excellency will of course realize, the extremely critical supply in the United States of certain of the items desired, such as trucks, may make it difficult to obtain these items from the War Assets Administration.

Please accept [etc.]

For the Acting Secretary of State:  

SPRUILLE BRADEN

§15.20/9-446

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Caribbean and Central American Affairs (Newbegan)

WASHINGTON, September 4, 1946.

Participants: Señor Dr. Don Julián R. Cáceres, Ambassador of Honduras
Spruille Braden, Assistant Secretary
Robert Newbegan, Assistant Chief, Division of Caribbean and Central American Affairs.

Ambassador Cáceres called to present to Assistant Secretary Braden, a note requesting the assistance of this Government in effecting the reorganization of the Honduran Army. The Ambassador referred to his conversation of August 13 with Mr. Braden when he had requested assistance in obtaining military equipment and was informed that it was not available at that time. He explained that following this conversation, the note which he was delivering together with its enclosure, signed by Dr. Silverio Lainez, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Dr. Juan Manuel Galvez, Minister of War, was prepared in cooperation with the American Military Mission. Mr. Braden told him that he would be glad to study the note and its recommendations.

R[OBERT] N[EWBEGIN]

§15.24/9-446

Memorandum by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Caribbean and Central American Affairs (Newbegan)

WASHINGTON, September 19, 1946.

There is attached a note from the Honduran Embassy, together with a routine draft reply, regarding the solicitation by the Honduran

21 Not printed.
22 Addressed to the Director of the Office of American Republic Affairs (Briggs) and to the Deputy Director (Trueblood).
23 Neither printed.
Government of our cooperation in reorganizing the Honduran Army. The note is accompanied by an organization chart and while the amount of new equipment which would be required by this Government is not shown, it is undoubtedly considerable. The Honduran authorities, according to Ambassador Cáceres in his conversation with Mr. Braden on September 4, had the cooperation of the American Military Mission in drawing up the plan.

The Honduran request points up the necessity for us to reach a definitive conclusion as to our attitude with regard to the supplying of further equipment to the Honduran Government and the related problem of our Military Mission. This opinion is shared by Mr. Dreier as will be noted by his memorandum to me and Mr. Spencer which is likewise attached. Dreier points out that, in general, the plan seems reasonable and generally corresponds with the conclusions reached during the bilateral staff conversations. In connection with our failure to supply arms to the Hondurans, as well as the somewhat anomalous position of our Military Mission, I am attaching a report from the Military Attaché at Tegucigalpa which indicates that the Mexicans are interested in superseding us in the supplying of arms to Honduras and in exerting an influence in Honduran military affairs. The Military Attaché reports President Carías as being impatient with the unexplained delay on the part of the United States in furnishing equipment.

It appears to me that whatever our final decision in the matter, either alternative leaves much to be desired. If we fail to supply equipment to Honduras, there is the possibility above mentioned that others may do so, to our ultimate disadvantage, and that the Hondurans may question the further utility of a military mission. Furthermore, I cannot feel that our line of conduct is completely honest if we continue to furnish a military mission at Honduran expense while withholding the necessary implements for that mission to function effectively. On the other hand, if we supply arms to Honduras, we are most definitely adding to the means at the disposal of the Honduran Government with which it can continue to impose its dictatorship and we lay ourselves open to criticism as supporting the dictatorship ourselves. In short, either alternative leaves us in an unsatisfactory position. I believe, however, that the time has come for us to decide which course of action is the most desirable as, obviously, we cannot have it both ways very much longer.

24 Memorandum of September 9 by John C. Dreier, Acting Chief of the Division of Special Inter-American Affairs, to Mr. Newhegin and George O. Spencer, Divisional Assistant, Division of Special Inter-American Affairs, not printed.
Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of Central America and Panama Affairs (Newbegin)

WASHINGTON, December 26, 1946.

Participants: Señor Dr. Don Julián R. Cáceres, Honduran Ambassador
Mr. Briggs
Mr. Newbegin

The Honduran Ambassador called this afternoon in connection with his request of December 23 that Colonel Adams 28 of the Military Mission be authorized to accompany Colonel Bertrand 29 to the United States on what was presumed to be a military purchasing mission. Ambassador Cáceres stated that he had received telegrams from the Honduran President, Secretary of War and Foreign Minister urging prompt action in this regard. Mr. Briggs explained that we had only the most friendly feeling towards the Honduran people and towards the Ambassador himself with whom we had had such cordial relations over a period of many years. He said that he felt that the only proper approach to current problems was a frank, open and friendly discussion. Accordingly, he wished to point out that this Government had a more friendly feeling and a greater desire to cooperate with those Governments which were based on the periodically and freely expressed will of the people. He mentioned that there had been no such elections in Honduras since 1933 and that this fact influenced our approach to the question of military cooperation. Mr. Briggs asserted that we were unwilling to supply military equipment to Honduras for this reason, although we were most happy to cooperate in all other fields.

Ambassador Cáceres expressed his appreciation of Mr. Briggs’ frankness. He said that he had received some time ago from military sources an indication that the Department did not approve supplying military equipment to Honduras and assumed that its reasons therefor were (1) that there would be criticism in the press and from public opinion were arms and ammunition made available; (2) that the furnishing of military equipment might be used to retain President Carías in power.

The Ambassador then digressed into a long discussion of the Honduran political situation, stating that while there had been no election,

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29 Col. Francisco Bertrand, Honduran Army.
nevertheless Carías was legally and constitutionally in power even though his retention of his position was reached through a loophole in the constitution which permitted the calling of a new constitutional assembly. He alleged that Carías had the support not only of his political party, but of the great mass of the people to whom tremendous benefits had accrued as a result of the peace obtaining during the Carías regime. He stated that a country could not be judged on legal grounds alone, but the state of its civic and material progress must be given full emphasis. In this connection he asserted that Honduras was definitely behind the times. It did, however, have the advantage and tradition of two long-established political parties. The difference between the two parties was insignificant and no general advantage was obtained by the people from a change in party control. Such benefits as the people obtained depended essentially upon the character of the President rather than the party he represented.

He suggested that it was not sound to criticize or judge an undeveloped country like Honduras by the standards which apply to the United States. Mr. Briggs replied that he wanted to make it particularly clear that we were not criticizing or judging Honduras and the Honduran Government which was a matter entirely within the province of Honduras. He was merely explaining why we were unable to cooperate in a military sense.

With specific reference to the proposed plan for the reorganization of the Honduran armed forces as drawn up by the Military Mission and the Honduran authorities,²⁶ the Ambassador pointed out that many of the items were not strictly speaking military, and that it might be desirable for Colonel Adams to come to the United States and review the current Honduran situation with the Department. It was pointed out that should Colonel Adams accompany Colonel Bertrand the trip might be subject to misinterpretation and convey the impression that the United States was in fact willing to give military support to Honduras. It was agreed that the Ambassador would communicate with his Government and the Department with the Embassy at Tegucigalpa in an effort to obtain clarification and fuller details with regard to the objectives of the trip and that the matter would be discussed again when such information was forthcoming.

The Ambassador pointed that his government was particularly anxious to obtain replacement parts for equipment which it already possessed. Mr. Briggs stated that the Department would give consideration to this request.

²⁶ See memorandum of September 4, p. 964.
CONFIDENTIAL

Tegucigalpa, December 31, 1946—5 p. m.

[Received January 1, 1947—6:25 a.m.]

190. Have discussed with Colonel Adams subject matter Deptel 153 December 31, 7 p. m. He understands clearly policy regarding withholding military equipment. The request of Ambassador Cáceres referred to engineering equipment such as bulldozers, tractors, graders, cranes, shovels, pumps, scrapers, welding equipment, trucks, et cetera. (For exact list of equipment required refer to table of organization and equipment 5415 less armaments).

Military Mission is not now advocating additional armaments for Honduras but on the contrary advocates reduction of arms to fit a small table of organization principally engineers. To accomplish this and the War Dept aim of standard US armaments throughout the hemisphere Military Mission suggests exchange of large stock of various foreign makes of arms now owned by Honduras for standard US makes.

The chief need of Honduras according to Adams is engineering equipment for road building, reservoirs and sanitary facilities in order to advance a program of civic and economic betterment. President Carías has assured Military Mission head that adequate financial arrangements for payment to the US Govt will be made.

Col. Beams’ [Adams’] projected trip to US was solely for the purpose of exploring possibilities of securing non-military equipment from surplus stocks available in Pacific area. Bertrand will not make trip to US with Adams who may proceed alone for consultation with appropriate authorities.

Erwin

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31 Not printed; in it Secretary Byrnes informed Ambassador Erwin concerning the Department’s reply to Ambassador Cáceres with regard to his request of September 4 for assistance in reorganizing the Honduran Army, and his request of December 23 that Col. Adams be authorized to come to the United States with Col. Bertrand to purchase military supplies for Honduras (815.24/12-2446); see memorandum of December 26, supra.