

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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A-385
NO.

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO: DIA
USCINCSO
CINCLANT
AmConsulate Santiago de los Caballeros

FROM : AmEmbassy SANTO DOMINGO

DATE: JANUARY 14, 1968

SUBJECT: POLITICO-MILITARY -- Armed Forces Loyalty at the Lower Levels

REF :

INTRODUCTION

1. At the time of the June 1966 presidential election, there was no doubt that the military establishment as a whole -- though legally precluded from voting -- was far more sympathetic to the candidacy of Balaguer than to that of Bosch. With Balaguer's election and assumption of the Presidency, the military sector automatically came to be regarded by practically all observers as one of his major pillars of strength. Dominican Armed Forces support of President Balaguer and his administration is, however, principally manifest and to some extent measurable at the upper ranks of the officer corps.

2. During the 18 months that President Balaguer has now been in office, the Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, Major General Enrique Perez y Perez, has given every indication of complete and unswerving loyalty to the President and to the cause of constitutional government. In so doing, there is evidence that he may have gotten out in front of the Armed Forces as a whole, at least some elements of which are less fully committed to such concepts as an apolitical military establishment and subordination of military to civil authority. To date, however, whatever risk Major General Perez y Perez has incurred in this regard appears to have been kept within tolerable limits. His statements, both public and private, continue to stress the importance of non-involvement by the military in political matters and of the overriding duty of the Armed Forces to support the present constitutional government. It would

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In Out

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seem reasonable to assume, moreover, particularly in view of a considerable element of personal loyalty felt by many military toward Balaguer, that such a posture by a career military officer wielding the authority of Secretary of State for the Armed Forces exerts some significant influence in shaping and determining the attitudes and disposition of at least a portion and perhaps a majority of those under his command.

3. While high-ranking military officers with whom we are in contact tend to reflect and echo the sentiments expressed by Major General Pérez y Pérez, it is understandably more difficult for us to observe and assess the sentiment and attitudes existing among junior officers and -- most difficult of all -- among the enlisted personnel. The latter group in particular is hard to approach on either a military or an intelligence basis, and even when this can be done it is difficult to assess the significance of whatever information may be developed. Whereas the attitudes of a senior officer may to some extent be taken as an indication of the way troops under his command might move or react in any emergency, the attitude of any single enlisted man tends to be just that, i.e. the personal position of one individual and not necessarily reflective of any wider disposition or sentiment.

4. This obviously poses a problem and a threat of a possible "information gap". In the delicate political environment of the Dominican Republic, where loyal support of the military is crucial to President Balaguer, a most important question then is whether the personal and professional loyalty manifested publicly by Armed Forces leaders is in fact matched by solid support throughout all levels and particularly in the lower ranks of the military establishment.

THE CASE FOR DISLOYALTY

5. The following are, as they have come to our attention, indicators of possibly significant dissension or disloyalty among lower levels of the Armed Forces:

A. The experience of 1965 demonstrates that in the face of a national emergency there has occurred, and therefore could presumably occur again, dissension and defection within the ranks of the Armed Forces. (However, it should be remembered that the lack of control and coordination of the Armed Forces at that time was a major contributing factor to the confusion, dissension, and apparent lack of leadership during the early phases of the 1965 affair,



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