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A-356

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NO.

TO : Department of State

INFO : USCINCSO
DIA

FROM : AmEmbassy SANTO DOMINGO

DATE: 28 DEC 67

SUBJECT : Comment by the Secretary of State for the Armed
Forces on the Politico-Military Situation in the DR

REF : Santo Domingo 1352

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
JAN 2 - 1968

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1. There is enclosed a Memorandum of Conversation reporting the comments of Major General Enrique Perez y Perez, Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, on December 19 with respect to the general politico-military situation in the Dominican Republic. Topics covered in this conversation included:

- (1) Internal Security Situation
- (2) The Dominican Military Budget
- (3) Military Assistance Program
- (4) Colonel Neit Nivar Seijas

2. While the Armed Forces Secretary may be correct in his appraisal of the internal security situation and of the limited dimensions of the political threat posed by "Wessinismo", it is worth noting that his comments in this regard are more sanguine and confident than those of many other local observers.

3. With respect to Major General Perez y Perez' comments on the Military Assistance Program, attention is invited to MAAG message SCRDR-433 and the Embassy's A-349, December 21, 1967

GROUP 2

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FORM 8-323

Drafted by:

DCM/FJDevine:sf 12-26-67

Contents and Classification Approved by:
The Ambassador

Clearances:

POL-Mr. Wilson; POL-Mr. Flannery; DAO-Lt.Col. Koepf; MAAG-Col. Joslin (in draft)

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4. Finally, it is now known that the Armed Forces Secretary did speak with President Balaguer along the lines indicated in the enclosure about the First Brigade Commander and that he is presently awaiting the reaction or decision of the President.

CRIMMINS

J.H.C.

by

J.J.D.

Enclosure:

Memo of Conversation of 12/19/67
with Major General Perez y Perez

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

December 19, 1967

SUBJECT: Politico-Military Situation

PARTICIPANTS: Major General Enrique Perez y Perez
Secretary of State for the Armed Forces
Frank J. Devine, Counselor of Embassy
Santo Domingo

In response to a suggestion by the Secretary of State for the Armed Forces the previous day, Mr. Devine called on Major General Perez y Perez in the latter's office for a friendly conversation which turned into a rather wide ranging discussion including the following topics (though not in the order shown).

1. Internal Security Situation:

Making appropriate reference to previous conversations, Mr. Devine inquired of General Perez y Perez as to the present state of internal security in the Dominican Republic. When the General professed to see the situation as being well in hand and devoid of any immediate threat, Mr. Devine asked whether he were equally satisfied with the situation within the Dominican military. The General replied that he was and that the Dominican military were united in their support of President Balaguer. When Mr. Devine inquired as to the danger or seriousness of pro-Wessin sentiment within the military, General Perez y Perez belittled this. He said that General Wessin y Wessin represented no problem for the Dominican Armed Forces; that the friendship and respect felt by many military men for Wessin the officer did not automatically carry over to Wessin the politician. The PQD political party was busily trying to disseminate the belief that the United States is training, financing and backing Wessin y Wessin, but this does not make much impression upon or deceive the average Dominican military officer. Occasionally, an officer or enlisted man is found proselytizing on behalf of Wessin but the summary "cancellation" of such personnel has had a marked and salutary effect throughout the military establishment. Mr. Devine inquired whether such cases were widespread or individual and isolated ones. The General replied that they were few in number; he cited one recent case of a lieutenant stationed in the vicinity of Santo

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Domingo who absented himself from his post of duty one night to proceed to the area of Monte Cristi there to distribute Wessin-ista propaganda. This lieutenant was among those cancelled.

Mr. Devine inquired whether General Perez y Perez was satisfied that the various facets and dimensions of the internal security problem were adequately known and controlled. The General professed to be quite satisfied on this score. He said that Armed Forces intelligence was active and effective both within the military and throughout the countryside. To illustrate this, he said that military intelligence had for some months been surveilling the activities of a group of approximately 15 men who were receiving military training twice per week in the area of Dajabon. It had been known that the objective of this group was to stage a raid against a Haitian military post along the border, thereby acquiring arms and creating an international incident. The Dominican authorities had considered seeking the cooperation of the Haitians in surveilling and apprehending this group but had desisted from this course of action because of distrust of Haitian willingness to withhold action until the appropriate time. Finally, on December 17, Dominican authorities had seized the group and simultaneously raided three different residences located in Santo Domingo, Santiago and Monte Cristi which were connected with its activities.

Mr. Devine congratulated General Perez y Perez upon this type of preventive surveillance capability. He said that rumors and reports to the contrary notwithstanding, the United States Government remained firm in its support of the constitutional government of President Balaguer. With the first one and a half years of the Balaguer administration now practically completed, it was certainly the desire of the United States to see the remaining two and one half years transpire under conditions of political and institutional stability. While there was certainly no objection to Wessin y Wessin, the PQD or anyone else organizing for a political role within the framework of democratic processes and elections, the United States would certainly look with disfavor upon activity by any parties seeking to come to power by other means. General Perez y Perez interrupted at this point to say very firmly "there is nobody who is going to do that, and if anyone tries to do it he will be eliminated (degollado)!"

In closing this particular part of the conversation, Mr. Devine reminded General Perez y Perez of the Ambassador's luncheon last July 14 for all top-ranking Dominican military officers and of the Ambassador's remarks upon that occasion (A-23). The General immediately responded that he remembered the luncheon very well

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and that the Ambassador's remarks had been exceedingly well chosen and had had a most salutary effect. Mr. Devine pointed out that the Ambassador's recent speech to the American Chamber of Commerce (A-306) had been designed for a similar purpose but with a different target audience. General Perez y Perez said that he had read the text of that speech and thought it a very good one. Mr. Devine then suggested that the Secretary of State for the Armed Forces might let us know if and when he were to feel that further similar action might be indicated in the military sector. General Perez y Perez said that he would be glad to do this.

2. The Dominican Military Budget:

Mr. Devine referred to a recent newspaper article stating that the 1968 budget for the Armed Forces would show a reduction from the 1967 level. General Perez y Perez confirmed that this was the case and when questioned, he said that the reduction would be a significant one in that it was expected to require the elimination of some 700 personnel slots from the Dominican Army, approximately 200 from the Air Force, and an additional but unspecified number from the Navy.

3. Military Assistance Program:

At one point in the conversation, the discussion turned to the U.S. Military Assistance Program in the Dominican Republic. Mr. Devine took the occasion to say that Colonel Joslin and the other members of the MAAG were interested in correcting, whenever they could, the delays and problems which had sometimes become sources of complaint on the part of General Perez y Perez and his Chiefs of Staff. There was, he said, a very conscious effort underway to insure that the Military Assistance Program here should be as responsive as possible to the real needs of the Dominican military. As one illustration of this, he cited the attention presently being afforded to the need for ship repair facilities and said it was his understanding that President Balaguer had endorsed the transfer of the Dominican Navy ship repair activities from Haina to Las Calderas. General Perez y Perez confirmed this and said that the President was all in favor of the new proposal. Mr. Devine said that in other areas as well the MAAG was considering how its overall program could be made as helpful and responsive as possible to the true needs of the Dominican Republic. At the same time, he said there were some areas which posed considerable difficulty. One of these lay in the realm of "soft goods", and although the

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MAAG and the Embassy were quite prepared to do what they could to be responsive to the General's recent request for uniforms, boots, etc., it was very difficult to be optimistic about the possibilities in this regard. The General replied that the need in this area was very acute and that he and the Dominican Armed Forces would certainly appreciate whatever could be done. He then said that another area in which he felt improvement should be sought was in that of civic action. The engineering batallion of the Dominican Army is completely prepared to assist in road building and other construction activities consonant with the economic and social development of the nation, but it stands in constant danger of paralysis by virtue of lack of tires, batteries, and other spare parts. Whether under MAP or through AID, he felt that some financing of procurement of such items was well warranted -- this in view of the inability to fund it within the Dominican military budget.

As a final item under this heading, Mr. Devine invited the General's reaction to the T-33 aircraft introduced into the Dominican Republic under MAP auspices during the present year. General Perez y Perez took a considerable time to reply but finally indicated that he was less than satisfied with the performance of these aircraft since their arrival in the country. When Mr. Devine noted that additional such aircraft were scheduled to arrive in the future, General Perez y Perez suggested that it would be very appropriate before then to bring in a high level technician or evaluation expert to review the T-33 program and to determine the cause of its problems as well as the suitability of the aircraft for service in the Dominican Republic.

4. Colonel Neit Nivar Seijas:

General Perez y Perez said, speaking on a personal and confidential basis, that he would that same evening request President Balaguer to relieve Colonel Neit Nivar Seijas of command of the First Brigade of the Dominican Army. He said that Nivar Seijas had been purposefully working to convert the First Brigade into an "autonomous command" -- somewhat along the lines of the former CEFA. This would, in effect, remove it from the regular chain of military command authority and bypass those officers normally superior to its commander. General Perez y Perez said that this was an unacceptable situation and that he, with the full support of Brig. General Perez Guillen (Army Chief of Staff), would tell the President that it could not continue. The Armed Forces Secretary also said that unless his recommendation for the relief of Colonel Nivar Seijas from command of the First Brigade were

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approved by the President, it would be impossible for him (General Perez y Perez) to remain in his present position. He acknowledged the fact that Colonel Nivar Seijas is a close personal friend of President Balaguer but said that this could not be permitted to interfere with and destroy military command systems.

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DCM/FJDevine:sf 12-26-67

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