

Unearthed: Fatal Secrets

## When a wave of torture and murder staggered a small U.S. ally, truth was a casualty.

*Was the CIA involved? Did Washington know? Was the public deceived? Now we know: Yes, Yes and yes.*

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TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras - The search for Nelson Mackay Chavarria - family man, government lawyer, possible subversive - began one Sunday in 1982 after he devoured a pancake breakfast and stepped out to buy a newspaper.

It ended last December when his wife, Amelia, watched as forensic scientists plucked his moldering bones from a pit in rural Honduras. Spotting a scrap of the red-and-blue shirt her husband was wearing the day he disappeared, she gasped: "Oh my God, that's him!"

Along with Amelia Mackay, the nation of Honduras has begun to confront a truth it has long suspected - that hundreds of its citizens were kidnapped, tortured and killed in the 1980s by a secret army unit trained and supported by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The intelligence unit, known as Battalion 316, used shock and suffocation devices in interrogations. Prisoners often were kept naked and, when no longer useful, killed and buried in unmarked graves.

Newly declassified documents and other sources show that the CIA and the U.S. Embassy knew of numerous crimes, including murder and torture, committed by Battalion 316, yet continued to collaborate closely with its leaders.

In order to keep U.S. dollars flowing into Honduras for the war against communism in Central America, the Reagan administration knowingly made a series of misleading statements to Congress and the public that denied or minimized the violence of Battalion 316.

These are among the findings of a 14-month investigation in which The Sun obtained formerly classified documents and interviewed U.S. and Honduran participants, many of whom - fearing for their lives or careers - have kept silent until now.

Among those interviewed were three former Battalion 316 torturers who acknowledged their crimes and detailed the battalion's close relationship with the CIA.

U.S. collaboration with Battalion 316 occurred at many levels.

\* The CIA was instrumental in training and equipping Battalion 316. Members were flown to a secret location in the United States for training in surveillance and interrogation, and later were given CIA training at Honduran bases.

\* Starting in 1981, the United States secretly provided funds for Argentine counterinsurgency experts to train anti-Communist forces in Honduras. By that time, Argentina was notorious for its own "Dirty War,"

which had left at least 10,000 dead or "disappeared" in the 1970s. Argentine and CIA instructors worked side by side training Battalion 316 members at a camp in Lepaterique, a town about 16 miles west of Tegucigalpa.

\* Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, who as chief of the Honduran armed forces personally directed Battalion 316, received strong U.S. support - even after he told a U.S. ambassador that he intended to use the Argentine method of eliminating subversives.

\* By 1983, when Alvarez's oppressive methods were well known to the U.S. Embassy, the Reagan administration awarded him the Legion of Merit for "encouraging the success of democratic processes in Honduras." His friendship with Donald Winters, the CIA station chief in Honduras, was so close that when Winters adopted a child, he asked Alvarez to be the girl's godfather.

\* A CIA officer based in the U.S. Embassy went frequently to a secret jail known as INDUMIL, where torture was conducted, and visited the cell of kidnap victim Ines Murillo. That jail and other Battalion 316 installations were off-limits to Honduran officials, including judges trying to find kidnap victims.

The exact number of people executed by Battalion 316 remains unknown. For years, unidentified and unclaimed bodies were found dumped in rural areas, along rivers and in citrus groves.

Late in 1993, the Honduran government listed 184 people as still missing and presumed dead. They are called "desaparecidos," Spanish for "the disappeared." Mackay is the first person on the list to be found and identified. The discovery of an identifiable body has enabled prosecutors to try to bring his killers to justice.

To this day, the events in Honduras have been little noticed, an obscure sideshow to a highly publicized struggle in the region. They came about as the Reagan administration was waging war against a Marxist regime in Nicaragua and leftist insurgents in El Salvador.

Honduras, a U.S. ally, was used by Washington as the principal base for its largely clandestine effort. Keeping Honduras secure from leftists was Battalion 316's mission.

"I think it is an example of the pathology of foreign policy," said Jack Binns, a Carter appointee as ambassador to Honduras who served from September 1980 through October 1981. "The desire to conduct a clandestine war against Nicaragua out of Honduras made us willing to go beyond turning a blind eye and made us willing to provide assistance to people doing these things even though we knew they were doing them."

Elliott Abrams, former assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs from December 1981 to July 1985, when he was appointed assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, vigorously defends the Reagan policy.

"Disappearing people - murdering people, was not the policy of the United States. Nor was it our policy to avert our eyes," Abrams said.

Abrams and other Reagan administration officials said that while fighting communism was the primary goal, they encouraged military leaders in Central America to curtail human rights abuses. In contrast to the Carter administration, which had emphasized human rights in crafting foreign policy, they tackled the issue privately, Abrams said.

"A human rights policy is not supposed to make you feel good," he said. "It's supposed to do some good in the country you're targeting."

No one was safe

Some of the victims of Battalion 316 were subversives, involved in such crimes as bombings and robberies. Nelson Mackay, an easy-going man of Australian descent, had many friends in the military. But he was suspected of arranging gun sales to a radical student group.

Many others were kidnapped and killed for exercising the same freedoms that the United States said it was fighting for in Latin America. Victims included students demonstrating for the release of political prisoners, union leaders who organized strikes for higher wages, journalists who criticized the military regime and college professors demanding fair tuition for the poor.

Among the kidnapped were 14 who described their treatment in interviews with The Sun. Nine said members of Battalion 316 clipped wires to their genitals and sent electric currents surging through their bodies.

"They started with 110 volts," said Miguel Carias, an architectural draftsman who was held captive with Nelson Mackay for a week in 1982. "Then they went up to 220. Each time they shocked me, I could feel my body jump and my mouth filled with a metal taste."

Former members of Battalion 316, interviewed in Canada where they are living in exile, described how prisoners were nearly suffocated with a rubber mask wrapped tightly around their faces. The mask was called "la capucha," or "the hood." Women were fondled and raped, the torturers said.

The body of Mackay, who was 37 years old and the father of five, showed signs of other tortures.

Farmers who found Mackay's body in 1982 and later buried it reported that his hands and feet were tied with rope and a noose was around his neck. A black liquid spilled from his mouth. The farmers recognized the substance as "criolina," a thick, black liquid rubbed on cattle to kill ticks and mites.

### Stalking the victims

Before being kidnapped and tortured, suspects were stalked by Battalion 316.

Jose Valle, a former battalion member now in Canada, describes a typical surveillance: "We would follow a person for four to six days. See their daily routes from the moment they leave the house. What kind of transportation they use. The streets they go on."

Once the battalion determined the time and place an individual was most vulnerable, the person was kidnapped, often in daylight by men in black ski masks. They ambushed their victims on busy streets, then sped off in cars with tinted windows and no license plates.

The prisoners of Battalion 316 were confined in bedrooms, closets and basements of country homes of military officers. Some were held in military clubhouses at locations such as INDUMIL, the Military Industries complex near Tegucigalpa.

They were stripped and tied hand and foot. Tape was wrapped around their eyes.

Those who survived recall interrogation sessions that lasted hours. Battalion members shouted obscenities, accused them of being terrorists, and told them they would never see their families again if they did not answer questions and confess.

Milton Jimenez, former leader of a radical leftist student group, .. endured such interrogation. He and several college housemates were kidnapped by military police on April 27, 1982. When Jimenez refused to answer questions, he said, the officers told ,, him they were going to kill him. "They said they were finishing my grave. . . . I was convinced that I was going to die."

They stood him before a firing squad. They aimed their guns at him, promising that it was his time to die. But they never fired.

Eventually, he was released.

"They never accused me of anything specific," said Jimenez in an interview in Tegucigalpa, where he is now a lawyer. "They said they knew I was a terrorist and they asked, 'Who are your friends?'"

## Simple methods

There was nothing sophisticated about the torture employed by Battalion 316. In addition to la capucha - a piece of rubber cut from an inner tube that prevents a person from breathing through the mouth and nose - they used rope to hang victims from the ceiling and beat them, and extension cords with exposed wires for shock torture.

Gloria Esperanza Reyes, now 52, speaking in an interview at her home in Vienna, Va., describes how she was tortured with electric wires attached to her breasts and vagina. "The first jolt was so bad I just wanted to die," she said.

Jose Barrera, a former battalion torturer interviewed in Toronto, recalls such pleas from prisoners. "They always asked to be killed," he said. "Torture is worse than death."

Battalion 316 got its early training from Argentines, who had been invited to Honduras by General Alvarez, himself an honors graduate of the Argentine Military Academy.

"The Argentines came in first, and they taught how to disappear people. The United States made them more efficient," said Oscar Alvarez, a former Honduran special forces officer and diplomat who was the general's nephew.

"The Americans ... brought the equipment," he said. "They gave the training in the United States, and they brought agents here to provide some training in Honduras.

"They said, 'You need someone to tap phones, you need someone to transcribe the tapes, you need surveillance groups.' They brought in special cameras that were inside thermoses. They taught interrogation techniques.

"The United States did not come here and say kill people," he added. "I never saw any efforts by the United States to create death squads."

General Alvarez's chief of staff, Gen. Jose Bueso Rosa, also describes the U.S. role in developing the battalion. "It was their idea to create an intelligence unit that reported directly to the head of the armed forces," he said. "Battalion 316 was created by a need for information. We were not specialists in intelligence, in gathering information, so the United States offered to help us organize a special unit."

(In 1986, Bueso was convicted in U.S. District Court in Miami of participating in a failed drug-financed plot to kill former Honduran President Roberto Suazo Cordoba.)

In the United States and in Honduras, the CIA trained members of the unit in interrogation and surveillance, former Battalion 316 members and Honduran officers said.

The training by the CIA was confirmed by Richard Stolz, then-deputy director for operations, in secret testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in June 1988.

In testimony declassified at The Sun's request, Stolz told the committee: "The course consisted of three weeks of classroom instruction followed by two weeks of practical exercises, which included the questioning of actual prisoners by the students.

"Physical abuse or other degrading treatment was rejected, not only because it is wrong, but because it has historically proven to be ineffective," he added.

He confirmed that a CIA officer visited the place where 24-year-old Ines Murillo was held during her captivity.

Interviews with members of Battalion 316 confirm Stolz's testimony: The CIA taught them to apply psychological pressure, but not physical torture. But former battalion members and victims say the CIA knew that torture was being used.

Florencio Caballero, a former battalion member, recalls the instruction and the reality.

"They said that torture was not the way to obtain the truth during an interrogation. But Alvarez said the quickest way to get the information was with torture," he told investigators of the Senate intelligence committee.

The Senate investigators interviewed Caballero in Canada as part of the same investigation in which Stolz testified.

In an interview with The Sun, Oscar Alvarez also recalls the reality.

"What was supposed to happen was that the intelligence unit would gather information and take it to a judge and say, 'Here, this person is a guerrilla, and here's the evidence,' he said. "But the Hondurans did not do that." Slashing his finger across his neck, he said, "They took the easy way."

And, he said, "U.S. officials did not protest."

Mark Mansfield, a spokesman for the CIA, said: "As a matter of policy, we don't comment on liaison relationships." But, he added, "The notion that the CIA was involved in or sanctioned human rights abuses in Honduras is unfounded."

A man, a mission

When Alvarez took command of the Honduran armed forces in 1982, at the age of 44, Washington had a man ideally suited to its mission to combat Communist insurgency in Central America.

"Gustavo Alvarez was very much out of national character - dynamic, firm, uncompromising," said Donald Winters, CIA station chief in Tegucigalpa from 1982 to 1984. "He knew where he wanted to go."

Alvarez was the son of a high school principal who made him recite poetry to overcome a stutter. But his preferred reading was military history. He so admired Germany's "Desert Fox" of World War II, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, that he named one of his sons Erwin and another Manfred, after Rommel's son.

General Alvarez made no secret about his belief that terror and violence were the only ways to deal with subversives. As commander of the national police force known as Fuerza de Seguridad Publica (FUSEP), he had already created an intelligence unit that would become known as Battalion 316.

On Feb. 6, 1981, while still FUSEP commander, but already selected as head of the Honduran armed forces, he told Binns of his admiration for the way the Argentine military had dealt with subversives and said that he planned to use the same methods in Honduras.

The U.S. ambassador was shocked. In an urgent cable to superiors in Washington, he described the conversation:

"Alvarez stressed theme that democracies and West are soft, perhaps too soft to resist Communist subversion. The Argentines, he said, had met the threat effectively, identifying - and taking care of - the subversives. Their method, he opined, is the only effective way of meeting the challenge.

"When it comes to subversion, [Alvarez] would opt for tough, vigorous and Extra-Legal Action," Binns warned.

Four months later, Binns was outraged to learn of the violent abduction and disappearance of Tomas Nativi, a 33-year-old university professor and alleged subversive. Nativi was dragged from his bed on June 11, 1981, by six men wearing black ski masks, according to witnesses and a 1993 Honduran government report.

He has not been seen since and is presumed dead.

In his cable on the incident to Washington, the ambassador said: "I believe we should try to nip this

situation in the bud. I have already asked [CIA] chief of station to raise this problem obliquely with ... Alvarez (whose minions appear to be the principal actors and whom I suspect is the intellectual force behind this new strategy for handling subversives/criminals)."

Falling on deaf ears

Binns recommended that the U.S. government act to stop the military violence by threatening to withhold military aid. "Those suggestions drew a thunderous silence from Washington," he said in a recent interview at his home in Tucson, Ariz. "My message was not a message anyone wanted to hear."

The Reagan administration had made it clear that it would diminish the criticism of human rights abuses by its allies in places such as Central America where it wanted to go on the offensive against the Communist threat.

Thomas O. Enders, former assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs and a chief architect of the early Reagan strategy, described the change of policy in a recent interview in New York, where he is a managing director of Salomon Brothers Inc., an investment banking firm.

"We didn't think that we could effectively sustain the resistance to the guerrillas in Central America without being willing to give significant public support to their governments," Enders said.

"We were afraid that the approach that had been adopted by the Carter administration, which was highly critical of them and would result in their demoralization, would fail to convince the Soviet Union or the Salvadorans, Hondurans and others that we really meant business."

In the Reagan strategy, Honduras, which the United States had used before to advance its objectives in Central America, was ideally located between Nicaragua and El Salvador. General Alvarez seemed an ideal partner.

"Alvarez was a darling of the Reagan administration," said Cresencio S. Arcos, U.S. Embassy press spokesman from June 1980 to July 1985 and ambassador to Honduras from December 1989 to July 1993.

While General Alvarez's star was rising, President Reagan was issuing orders for an aggressive, largely secret thrust against communism in Central America.

By March 9, 1981 - after less than two months in office - Reagan signed a presidential "finding" that ordered the expansion of covert operations authorized by the Carter administration, to "provide all forms of training, equipment, and related assistance to cooperating governments throughout Central America in order counter foreign-sponsored subversion and terrorism."

On Dec. 1, 1981, he ordered the CIA to work primarily through "non-Americans" against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and leftist insurgents in El Salvador.

The "non-Americans" were to include Argentines, paid for by the CIA, Enders said in an interview last month. He said there did not seem to be any alternative to using the Argentines, despite their poor record on human rights.

"There were not many people with counterinsurgency experience," Enders said. "How many people were there who were Spanish speakers? [Human rights] was obviously a concern, but when we got through looking at it, we didn't see that we had any clear choice."

By the end of 1981, the Reagan administration had replaced Ambassador Binns with John Dimitri Negroponte, a man viewed as committed to the administration's decision to confront communism in Latin America.

USS Honduras

The partnership with Honduras and General Alvarez expanded. Military aid to Honduras jumped from \$3.9

million in 1980 to \$77.4 million by 1984.

The tiny country eventually was crowded with so much U.S. military equipment and personnel that some started referring to it as "the USS Honduras."

While the U.S. government heaped money and praise on Alvarez, evidence of human rights abuses mounted.

One accusation came from Col. Leonidas Torres Arias, after he was ousted as intelligence chief for the Honduran armed forces.

In August 1982, he told a packed news conference in Mexico City about Battalion 316, "a death squad operating in Honduras that was being led by armed forces chief, General Gustavo Alvarez." He mentioned three victims by name, including Nelson Mackay.

At the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, U.S. officials were confronted with personal and written appeals for help from relatives of the disappeared.

Former Honduran Congressman Efrain Diaz Arrivillaga said he spoke several times about the military's abuses to U.S. officials in Honduras, including Negroponte.

"Their attitude was one of tolerance and silence," he said. "They needed Honduras to loan its territory more than they were concerned about innocent people being killed."

Negroponte, now U.S. ambassador to the Philippines, has declined repeated requests by telephone and in writing since July for interviews about this report, including most recently in a hand-delivered letter to the embassy in Manila.

Almost every day, Honduran newspapers published stories about the military's violence and full-page ads with pictures of the missing. In 1982 alone, at least 318 stories were published about military abuses.

Some directly named Alvarez.

"General Alvarez, as a human being, I beg you to free my children," read one headline from El Tiempo on April 30, 1982.

Members of the Honduran Congress drafted resolutions calling for investigations into the disappearances.

Relatives of Battalion 316's victims marched by the hundreds through the narrow streets of Tegucigalpa demanding the return of the missing.

"Alive they were taken! Alive we want them back!" they chanted, mostly wrinkled old women with white scarves covering their heads, carrying posters with drawings of their missing sons and grandsons.

But, determined to avoid questions in Congress, U.S. officials in Honduras concealed evidence of rights abuses.

"There are no political prisoners in Honduras," asserted the State Department human rights report on Honduras for 1983.

By that time the embassy was aware of numerous kidnappings of leftists and had participated in the freeing of two prominent victims whose abduction and torture had become embarrassing.

Specific examples of brutality by the Honduran military typically never appeared in the human rights reports, prepared by the embassy under the direct supervision of Ambassador Negroponte. Those reports to Congress were required under the Foreign Assistance Act, which in most circumstances prohibits the United States from providing military aid to nations whose governments engage in a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights.

The reports from Honduras were carefully crafted to leave the impression that the Honduran military respected human rights.

The end of Alvarez

By 1984, other Honduran officers began to worry that Alvarez had dragged the country too far into violence against their own people.

Col. Eric Sanchez, now retired from the armed forces, thought Alvarez was "obsessed."

Recalling a conversation with Alvarez about Battalion 316, Sanchez said the armed forces chief told him: "One had to fight Communists with all weapons and in every arena, and not all of them are fair."

Gen. Walter Lopez, currently one of Honduras' three vice presidents, recalled in an interview: "(Alvarez) was dangerous. He was pushing our country to do something we did not want to do. We were willing to be trained professionally, but only to defend our country. Not for so-called undercover operations."

On March 31, 1984, Alvarez's military career came to a sudden and unexpected end.

Accused of misappropriation of funds, he was ousted by his own officers. One junior officer held a gun to the general's head and handcuffed him. He was put on a military plane for Costa Rica.

Later the same year, Alvarez and his wife and five children landed in Miami, where they lived for five years. He joined an evangelical church in Miami and embraced religion with as much passion as he had embraced the fight against communism.

In 1988, Alvarez said he had been urged in a dream to go back to Honduras and preach the gospel. Shunning offers of protection from friends in the military, he preached on street corners, saying, "My Bible is my protection."

On Jan. 25, 1989, five men dressed in blue and wearing hard hats surrounded his car and riddled it with bullets from machine guns. Moments before he died, bleeding from 18 wounds, Alvarez asked: "Why are they doing this to me?"

The assassins have never been found, but a group called the Popular Liberation Movement claimed responsibility.

In a statement, the group referred to Alvarez as a psychopath who tried "to escape popular justice by disguising himself as a harmless and repentant Christian."

A widow's defense

Lilia Alvarez, the general's widow, defends his memory.

"He knew they would criticize him for what he did. ... There were some illegal detentions, and maybe the army executed some people, but think about how many lives were saved. Thousands of people were saved because my husband prevented a civil war."

The Honduran government has taken several steps forward in the pursuit of the truth about the disappearances of the 1980s.

In a 1993 report, "The Facts Speak for Themselves," the government lists the name of each of the disappeared and admits that it did not protect its citizens from the abuses of the military.

"Extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions and the lack of due process ... characterized these years of intolerance," stated the report of the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights in Honduras. "Perhaps more troublesome than the violations themselves was the authorities' tolerance of these crimes and the impunity with which they were committed."

The report represents the first time that the Honduran government has admitted that the disappearances occurred and that it shares responsibility.

Within a year after he became president of Honduras in 1994, Carlos Roberto Reina took further steps to identify those responsible.

"Those of us who lived in that time are committed not to relive it," said Honduran Attorney General Edmundo Orellana. "We are committed to building a society that says, 'Never again.' "

One of the most important developments in that task was the discovery of an identifiable body of a "desaparecido" - Nelson Mackay. With an identified body, a murder investigation could be undertaken. The case has been helped by the willingness of Miguel Carias, his alleged co-conspirator, to testify.

In an interview, Carias described their last encounter.

They were together in a brown brick house on the northern edge of Tegucigalpa that Battalion 316 used as a secret jail. Mackay was held in a bedroom, his hands and feet tied with rope. Carias, locked in the closet, heard Mackay praying.

"Hail, Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women ..."

Mackay's voice grew louder as he recited the prayer over and over.

"I told him, 'Mackay please shut up. I am going crazy with all your prayers,'" Carias said.

Mackay kept on. "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death ..."

"I never heard or saw Nelson again," Carias said.

More than a decade after the execution of Mackay and others, forces in Honduras still seek to thwart the investigation into the crimes of the Honduran military.

Carias is kept under round-the-clock guard. Two other Honduran witnesses in previous inquiries have been killed.

The Honduran human rights commissioner, Leo Valladares, has received so many threats that, in April, he moved three of his children out of Honduras. The move was hurriedly arranged after one of Valladares' bodyguards was gunned down on a bus. No arrest has been made in the slaying.

Despite this sort of intimidation, the relatives of the disappeared remain determined. Once a month, they meet in front of the Honduran Congress, in the center of Tegucigalpa, and pass out fliers with the names and faces of the missing.

Fidelina Borjas Perez, 66, has been searching for her son, Samuel, since he disappeared in January 1982 from a bus traveling to Honduras from Nicaragua.

"One day I hope God lets me find my son, even if it is only his cadaver," she said.

Not one of the relatives believes that the disappeared are alive. But they want to know how their relatives died and who is responsible.

"We are never going to stop looking," says Maria Concepcion Gomez, whose common-law husband, a union leader, disappeared in August 1982. Sitting in her living room beneath a picture of The Last Supper, she said: "We are never going to get tired. If the army is hoping that we will forget or that we will give up, they are wrong."

Nelson Mackay's widow, Amelia, shared that determination.

A few weeks after her husband disappeared, she stopped her public search for him because of telephone threats against her children. Instead, she worked long hours to keep them enrolled in private schools.

During the day she worked as an administrative assistant at the Honduran Foreign Ministry. At night, she baked cakes and sold them to friends to supplement her income.

She stashed beneath her bed a box containing her husband's dental records, his identification card listing his height and weight, and a photograph of him wearing the red-and-blue checked shirt he wore the day he disappeared.

"I could not sleep at night," she remembered. "I would walk around the dark house thinking maybe he would come home. Maybe he would appear."

The first 'banana republic'

Honduras is the original "banana republic," a term coined to describe the country's political and economic dependency on U.S. fruit companies during the early 1900s.

The north coast of Honduras, the country's richest farm region, was controlled by U.S. fruit companies at the turn of the century. By 1914, they owned nearly a million acres of Honduras' most fertile territory.

The fruit companies built Honduras' only rail lines to transport produce, installed their own banking systems, and bribed politicians and union leaders to do their bidding.

Almost none of the wealth stayed in Honduras, the poorest country in Central America.

Population: 5.2 million

Average per capita income: \$540 per year

Education: Nearly half of the people have not finished sixth-grade. 40 percent are illiterate.

Home life: 55 percent live in rural areas or slums that surround Tegucigalpa, the capital, or San Pedro Sula, the nation's second-largest city.

Religion: Roman Catholic Honduras is not the only place in Latin America where the Central Intelligence Agency has collaborated with repressive regimes.

It was disclosed this year that a Guatemalan army officer linked to two high-profile killings was a paid CIA agent. One of the victims was an American innkeeper in Guatemala, the other a leftist guerrilla married to a Baltimore-born lawyer.

CIA officials allegedly knew that the Guatemalan, Col. Julio Roberto Alpirez, was involved in the killings, but concealed the -- information.

Created in 1947, the CIA has conducted covert operations in Latin America since its inception. In 1954, the CIA engineered a coup launched from neighboring Honduras that overthrew Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman and installed a military regime.

The CIA supported the overthrow of Chilean President Salvador Allende in 1973, then launched a covert program to enhance the reputation of Chilean strongman Gen. Augusto Pinochet. U.S. officials have admitted that the CIA paid former Panamanian military ruler Manuel Antonio Noriega more than \$160,000 as an intelligence source.

In the 1980s, the CIA expanded its activities in Latin America. The agency trained and funded a clandestine paramilitary force known as the "contras" to attack the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

In El Salvador, Col. Nicolas Carranza, then-Treasury police chief, reportedly was on the CIA payroll during the 1980s as an informant. Carranza and the Treasury police have been linked to right-wing Salvadoran

death squads.

In one of its most controversial Cold War actions, the CIA orchestrated the failed invasion of Cuba by a force of Cuban exiles at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961.

With the end of the Cold War, questions are being raised about the role of the CIA and other U.S. intelligence agencies. The intelligence agencies, particularly the CIA, are undergoing an intense re-evaluation by a presidential commission that is expected to report its findings early next year.

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