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Honduras: Former Armed Forces Chief Assassinated

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Jan. 25, former Honduran armed forces chief, Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, was ambushed and killed near his home in Tegucigalpa. Alvarez, 56, served as military chief from 1982 to 1984 during the government of President Roberto Suazo Cordova. After being ousted by his military colleagues in 1984, he spent a year in Miami. A fervent anti-communist and friend of the Reagan administration, Alvarez helped to set up the Nicaraguan contra forces in Honduran base camps at a time when government officials were denying the presence of contras in national territory. Alvarez's criticisms of the Nicaraguan government brought unwanted attention to the US-supported contra forces, and in 1984 he was ousted via the efforts of Gen. Walter Lopez Reyes. US officials said Alvarez was relieved from his duties due to political activities, but Honduran officials claim he had become too powerful and would not consult them before making decisions. Anonymous calls to a local radio station, Radio America, claimed that a leftist group known as the Popular Liberation Forces was responsible for the assassination. Witnesses said a group of six men waited for Alvarez in front of his house in the Florencia district, and opened submachine-gun fire on his car killing he and his driver and wounding his son-in-law. (Basic data from AP 01/25/89)

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