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U.S. Secretary Of Defense Expresses Satisfaction With Guatemalan Government's Progress In Human Rights Area

by Deborah Tyroler
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On Feb. 17 in Guatemala City, US Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney met with President Jorge Serrano, Defense Minister Jose Garcia, and Human Rights Attorney General Ramiro de Leon Carpio. In statements to reporters following the meetings, Cheney said he was "satisfied" with the government's progress in curbing human rights abuses since Serrano took power in January 1991. According to Cheney, "the situation in this country has improved greatly over the past year." He added that US congressional approval for resumption of military aid to Guatemala was now a real possibility. In December 1990, Washington suspended military aid due to persistent human rights violations attributed to the Guatemalan armed forces. Last year, the US Congress voted to extend the ban, which cannot be formally lifted before 1993. Cheney told reporters that, despite the military aid suspension, authorization had been obtained to spend US$170,000 on scholarships for training Guatemalan army officers in the US. Sources from the US Embassy cited by the Agence France-Presse confirmed that the talks covered closer military cooperation with Guatemala. An unidentified US diplomat was quoted as saying that Washington is "very satisfied" with the way the Guatemalan government has dealt with the guerrilla insurgency, and its peace initiatives. (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, 02/17/92; Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 02/17/92, 02/18/92)

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