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Honduras: Clandestine Group Claims Links With Human Rights Defense Committee

by Deborah Tyroler

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Once again, the country's leading human rights group the Honduran Human Rights Defense Committee (Comite para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, CODEH) has been forced to defend itself against efforts to undermine the organization's reputation. The latest incident stems from the appearance of a bizarre communique linking CODEH to a recent bomb attack against a son of former armed forces chief ret. Gen. Humberto Regalado (1986-1989). The attack took place on Jan. 13 in San Pedro Sula. Regalado's son had parked a vehicle belonging to the General on one of the city's principal thoroughfares. A powerful bomb explosion destroyed the car, injured several pedestrians and shattered windows in several nearby buildings. Regalado's son, who was away from the vehicle at the time, was not harmed. Initially, no one claimed responsibility. However, over one week after the incident, a previously unknown organization calling itself the Group of Four (Grupo de los Cuatro) signed a communique claiming responsibility for the blast. According to the communique, the group's primary objective is to "eliminate injustice in the country through a policy of eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth." In the document, the organization defines itself as "the armed wing of CODEH." On Jan. 26, CODEH president Ramon Custodio emphatically denied any links to the group and characterized the communique as "part of the campaign which seeks to discredit our institution." CODEH, founded in 1981, has waged a relentless struggle against military impunity and abuse of authority within government institutions. Over the years, CODEH's adversaries have resorted to a wide array of tactics to destroy the group's credibility. (Sources: Agence France-Presse, 01/13/93; Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 01/13/93, 01/26/93)

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