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LADB Staff

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## **Ex-Honduran President Reina Ordered to Pay Fine in Games Scandal**

*by LADB Staff*

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The Corte Suprema de Justicia (CSJ) ordered former president Carlos Roberto Reina (1994-1998) to pay a US\$2,130 fine for his part in a scandal involving the 1997 Central American Games held in the northern city of San Pedro Sula. Reina insists the charges against him are politically motivated, while governing Partido Nacional (PN) leaders are discussing whether to press for his ouster from the Parlamento Centroamericano (PARLACEN).

In September 1998, Comptroller General Vera Rubi began investigating irregularities in the construction of sports facilities for the games. The games resulted in a loss to the city of San Pedro Sula of US\$18 million (see NotiCen, 1998-10-29). The investigation revealed that as much as US\$14 million had disappeared in kickbacks and fraud in the handling of construction contracts.

In February 1999, Rubi ordered Reina to pay a fine for his failure "to inform concerning the illegal, incorrect, and inappropriate execution of the contracts." She gave him until May 18 to comply. Reina delayed execution of the order with an appeal to the court to dismiss the charges on the grounds that he was only the honorary head of the games' organizing committee (see NotiCen, 1999-05-20). Reina's case was bolstered by a brief submitted to the court by state prosecutors arguing that the comptroller general's office exceeded its authority, encroaching on judicial prerogatives in finding against Reina.

However, on Oct. 5, the CSJ agreed with arguments by the comptroller general that Reina had been present and voting at an October 1997 meeting of the organizing committee when the contracts were approved and therefore shared responsibility for the contract irregularities. The decision of the court was unanimous.

Two alternates replaced magistrates who are friends of Reina. Reina, currently the president of PARLACEN, has agreed to pay the fine from funds contributed by supporters. "The money is ready," he said. "I will pay as soon as possible." He said the contributions showed that "the people" were behind him. He called the court ruling an act motivated by a political alliance between the government headed by President Carlos Flores and the Callejistas a faction of the PN led by former president Rafael Callejas (1990-1994).

The purpose of the alliance was to promote "tolerance for acts of immense corruption" during the Callejas presidency, Reina said. Reina took office in 1994 with a promise to lead a "moral revolution" that would eradicate government corruption. He aimed the moral crusade largely at the Callejas administration (see NotiSur, 1995-06-02), but was unsuccessful in his efforts to punish Callejas and members of his administration for alleged acts of corruption.

### *Governing party may ask for Reina's expulsion from PARLACEN*

Meanwhile, PN leaders are considering having their delegation to PARLACEN ask for Reina's expulsion. Besides the Central American games, the charges against him in the parliament would include allegations that, while president, Reina wrote checks against a secret account he denied having. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, head of the PN central committee, said he could prove that certain checks, brought to light recently by Callejas, are authentic and would show "that Reina is not the person who should be presiding over the Central American Parliament." [Sources: Notimex, 05/15/99, 10/05/99; La Prensa (Honduras), 09/01/99, 10/06/99; El Tiempo (Honduras), 08/04/99, 08/13/99, 09/04/99, 10/06/99, 10/08/99]

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