

Council
On ✓

NEWS AND

Hemispheric
Affairs

ANALYSIS

1900 L Street, NW; Washington, DC 20036 (202) 775-0216

1612 20th St. NW, Washington, DC 20009 (202) 745-7000
For Friday A.M. papers, April 18, 1986

COHA CALLS FOR RECALL OF ENVOY TO ARGENTINA

- Frank Ortiz, loud-mouth U.S. ambassador in Buenos Aires, should be brought back to Washington
- Heavy-handed methods, bizarre behavior with visitors make ambassador an embarrassment to United States and an annoyance to Argentina -- Ortiz seen in effort to unseat Argentine Foreign Minister Caputo
- Ortiz penned 1981 hit list of liberal career foreign service officers
- Ambassador has lengthy record of questionable and undiplomatic behavior during stints in Peru and Guatemala -- insensitivity to rights makes Ortiz a poor symbol of U.S. values in newly democratized Argentina
- Cable raises serious issues over accuracy of ambassador's reporting
- Peacebusters: Ortiz, with Reich, Davis, Shlaudeman, Tambs, Piedra, and the retiring Gavin, push administration's anti-Contadora effort

Frank Ortiz, the U.S. ambassador to Argentina who quarreled with a U.S. Congressional delegation, led by Thomas P. O'Neill, during a recent visit to Buenos Aires, has a long history of arrogant and undiplomatic behavior in the pursuit of right-wing policies. Sacked by President Carter for his friendliness with the repressive military government of Guatemala in 1980, Ortiz, who has made a career out of insensitivity to human rights, was one of the Reagan administration's most inappropriate appointments when he was named envoy to newly-democratizing Argentina in 1983.

ANTI-CAPUTO CAMPAIGN

Since that time Ortiz has thoroughly antagonized the Alfonsin government through repeated and heavy-handed attempts to influence the country's foreign policy, particularly over Central America, and reported efforts to have Foreign Minister Dante Caputo fired because of his strong pro-Contadora stand. The Argentine daily La Prensa recently reported on Ortiz' angry complaints to Alfonsin over Caputo's activities, particularly his role in the adoption of the Caraballeda declaration.

AN EMBARRASSMENT

Ortiz has also consistently made trouble for visiting U.S. delegations. He interfered in meetings and otherwise disrupted trips made by former President Jimmy Carter in 1984 and Sen. Edward Kennedy in

December 1985. He typically insists on being present at sessions of visiting U.S. dignitaries with Argentine officials, and injects comments that range from the awkward to the bizarre. During Kennedy's meeting with Alfonsin, the Senator reportedly congratulated the Argentine President on a favorable profile of him in the New York Times Magazine. Ortiz then claimed, falsely, to be the cousin of its author, Lydia Chavez.

During the recent visit by Congressional Democrats, Ortiz interrupted conversations with Alfonsin, and also attempted to cut short a presentation by Argentine Senator Adolfo Gass on the Contadora peace proposals, claiming that the U.S. Congressmen had another engagement, and adding that Gass could finish his presentation at a cocktail party that evening. "I wasn't invited," responded Gass.

The leaking, and the inaccuracy, of his cable describing the Alfonsin meeting has, according to sources in Buenos Aires, completely undermined Ortiz' credibility in the Argentine capital. Several Congressional sources close to the O'Neill delegation have confirmed to COHA that Ortiz' account of the meeting, in the leaked cable, was falsified, and that Alfonsin never made the comments about Nicaraguan involvement in terrorism and subversion that Ortiz attributed to him. Ortiz' report on a delegation meeting with Caputo was also termed a serious misrepresentation.

Two weeks previously, Ortiz had been summoned by Alfonsin to explain President Ronald Reagan's assertion, in a March 16 speech on contra funding, that Nicaragua had aided Argentine terrorists. Buenos Aires refuted the claim.

If the Reagan administration is interested in improving relations with Argentina, and demonstrating a new sensitivity to human rights, it should recall Ortiz and urge him to retire early from the foreign service.

THE ORTIZ FILE

Frank Ortiz joined the Foreign Service in 1951, serving in Ethiopia, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay before his first ambassadorial appointment, to Barbados and Grenada, in 1977. In July 1979, three months after the coup against Grenadian strongman Sir Eric Gairy, Ortiz was transferred to Guatemala, after laying the base for the Carter administration's antagonistic stand toward the new leftist government of Maurice Bishop.

In Guatemala City, he became closely identified with the violent military regime of Gen. Romeo Lucas Garcia. While the Carter administration was trying to back away from notorious human rights violators, Ortiz played tennis with Lucas Garcia, was openly hostile toward human rights activists, and told the State Department that outside denunciations of Lucas' regime had no basis in fact.

In April 1980, COHA revealed that Ortiz had invited a U.S. Navy destroyer to visit Guatemala for a goodwill visit, without consulting his superiors at the State Department. For an action so directly in conflict with the Carter administration's human rights policy, Ortiz was recalled from Guatemala and assigned to the U.S. Southern Command in Panama as a "special representative." There, colleagues say, he lost no opportunity to deride Carter's human rights policy and the President himself.

After Ronald Reagan's electoral victory, Ortiz revenged himself by working in a special office in the State Department where he drew up a hit list of ambassadors to be dismissed by the incoming administration, among them Lawrence Pezzulo, Robert White, and especially James Cheek, who as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Inter-American Bureau played a key role in having him removed from his Guatemala post. All of Ortiz' immediate superiors under Carter, deputy assistant Secretaries of State for Latin America James Cheek, John Bushnell, and Samuel Eaton, were denied the customary ambassadorships for officers of their rank and experience. Cheek was exiled to the U.S. embassy in Katmandu, as political affairs officer. Cooperating with ideologues from such right-wing organizations as the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation, Ortiz oversaw a purge of moderates in favor of hardline right-wingers.

MAKING TROUBLE IN PERU

For his efforts Ortiz was offered any ambassadorship in Latin America. He reportedly asked for Brazil, but was turned down and offered Peru. For Ortiz there was sweet irony in this because it meant that he would be

returning to a country from which he had been virtually expelled in 1969. As a young second secretary at the U.S. embassy in Lima at the time, Ortiz became a close associate of former FBI agent William Chappers, who ran several private security agencies in Peru. These firms provided a variety of services to Peruvian corporations, and worked closely with the country's Civil Guard and Military Police.

Chappers employed a half dozen retired security service officials for a variety of intelligence tasks, all of whom reported directly to Ortiz. In the course of their activities the three security firms compiled dossiers on 50,000 Peruvians, which reportedly were made available to the CIA. In November 1969, the Peruvian government arrested Chappers for his activities and expelled him. After a threat to declare Ortiz persona non grata, the U.S. government withdrew him.

Back in Lima in 1981, Ortiz resumed work with another pet project, the Peruvian Workers' Confederation (CTP), whose then-leader, the corrupt Julio Cruzado, was heavily subsidized by the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD). In 1982 Alan Garcia, now President of Peru, was elected Secretary General of the APRA party, in which the CTP had long participated. At one point during that year, Garcia met Ortiz at a public gathering, and the ambassador asked, "why don't you tell us what's happening in the CTP?" Responded Garcia, "Wouldn't it be better if you told us what's happening in the CTP?" Ortiz snapped, "I won't tolerate a lack of respect." Cruzado was expelled from APRA shortly thereafter.

When Garcia visited Argentina in March, Ortiz met privately with Alfonsin beforehand, and pressed him not to express any support for the Peruvian President's position on limiting repayment of foreign debt.

FULL-COURT PRESS AGAINST CONTADORA BACKERS

Ortiz has been an enthusiastic participant in the U.S. diplomatic effort to discourage support for the Contadora peace process. With Otto Reich in Caracas, Lewis Tambs in Costa Rica, the retiring John Gavin in Mexico, and Harry Shlaudeman reportedly up for the Brazil post, the Reagan administration has appointed right-wing ambassadors to key Contadora and Lima (Contadora support) Group countries, to pressure those countries to abandon the search for a negotiated peace in Central America, and acquiesce in U.S. efforts to overthrow the government of Nicaragua.

The Washington Post

Sunday, July 6, 1980

How a Career Diplomat Was Undone By the State Department's Realpolitik

By Nicholas Lemann
Washington Post Staff Writer

The word got out a little over a week ago, in the vague and indirect way that word gets out in the diplomatic world, that the American ambassador to Guatemala, Frank V. Ortiz Jr., was being recalled after less than a year on the job because of strong policy disagreements with the home office.

In one sense, that is what did happen. The State Department has been systematically replacing all U.S. ambassadors in Central America, apparently feeling that the United States needs a new breed of envoys there who can deal with dicey situations of incipient revolution—not diplomats of the old school like Ortiz, 54, the highest ranking Hispanic in the foreign service and a man practically born in striped pants. His superiors clearly felt he was not doing a good job.

But, more specifically, Ortiz' recall was helped along by the activities of a network of leakers in the State Department, private human rights activists, politicians here and in Guatemala and journalists, all of whom are part of the *Realpolitik* of the upper reaches of the State Department.

Ortiz' story must be told with some vagueness and indirection because people at State prefer to speak as "informed sources" and such, rather than under their own names. However, its outlines are fairly clear.

Frank Ortiz went to Guatemala late last summer after tours in the department and as ambassador to Barbados. At the time, the military government of Gen. Romeo Lucas Garcia was a little more than a year old, and, in the view of the U.S. government, was allowing the human rights situation there to worsen considerably.

The Lucas Garcia government's main problem has been a brutal series of assassinations—hundreds or thousands among government officials, professors, students, labor leaders and businessmen, resulting in ever-greater chaos and an ever-stronger revolutionary left.

A former foreign minister was gunned down in broad daylight in Guatemala City. So was a former mayor of the city. So were 15 professors at San Carlos University. At a Coca-Cola plant, three successive heads of the union were killed and a fourth ab-

ducted, and a plant manager was killed. The murders have come mostly from the right, but from the left, as well, and it is widely felt that the government has been at least complicit in the deaths of several liberals.

All parties seem to agree that Ortiz, while in contact with all major political elements in Guatemala, stayed in closer touch with the military government, feeling that it would be the most likely agent of change for the better—a feeling not shared by most other observers. In the process, the Guatemalan left and the human rights lobby in Washington became convinced that his sympathies lay with the right.

Here Laurence R. Birns, a ruffled 50-year-old ex-professor who spends his time in an office on 16th Street, wearing white cotton T shirts and drooping socks rather than pinstripes, enters the story. Birns is the director of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, a Ford Foundation-funded human rights group.

Continued

Birns is a man with little money and no official position, but quite a lot of influence, stemming from his wide range of contacts and his strong views. He knows people in Latin America, in the State Department, at the White House, on Capitol Hill and in the press.

This enables him, for instance, to see much of the classified cable traffic of our Latin American ambassadors. On the basis of cables leaked to him by State Department officials, Birns decided last fall that Ortiz had to go, and began to air that view to his friends.

The time was ripe for a change in Guatemala anyway. The State Department sent a new ambassador to El Salvador in March, and to Nicaragua last year. Ortiz' star was fading, because in November he came to Washington and told his superiors what he sincerely believed: that the government-condoned violence in Guatemala was abating. In fact, it wasn't.

In April, Birns spotted an item from a Guatemalan newspaper mentioning that a Navy destroyer, the USS Manley, had made a port visit to Guatemala in March. Because the United States, for human rights reasons, does not have a military relationship with Guatemala, he found this unseemly.

One day soon thereafter, Birns went with a group of church activists to see James Cheek, a deputy assistant secretary of state with responsibility for Central America and the Caribbean. He mentioned the Manley's visit to Cheek. Cheek said he hadn't heard of it, but that he would check it out.

That evening, Cheek called Birns back and said that yes, the destroyer had visited Guatemala, and no, he hadn't known about it. Birns immediately called a reporter at The Washington Post, who verified the story and then wrote it.

As it turns out, State Department regulations then didn't require Ortiz to tell Washington about the ship's visit. They do now; his superiors felt good judgment would have dictated that he send a cable. Ortiz maintained that an American official in neighboring Belize covered him by cabling the news about the Manley.

Birns says the Post story "without question" brought about Ortiz' recall. "That's exaggerating the importance of it," says Cheek. "It might have fed some existing dissatisfaction on the part of some."

On June 10, Rep. Thomas R. Harkin (Iowa), a strong human rights supporter, wrote to President Carter complaining about Ortiz. Among other things, the letter said, "I was very disturbed when last December Gen. Singlaub (whom you fired from his post in Korea) took his right-wing group to Guatemala and was ushered around by our ambassador."

Retired Maj. Gen. John K. Singlaub and another conservative general, Daniel Graham, did go to Guatemala in December to meet with businessmen there. But Singlaub and Ortiz both stoutly maintain that they have never met or even had any indirect contact. "It's a total fantasy," Singlaub said.

Harkin says he got his information from news clippings Guatemalans gave him. "If I'm wrong I'll apologize for that incident," he said. "I will not apologize for my contention that his policy was wrong."

The next piece of bad news for Ortiz came when he read the *Week in Review* section of the Sunday, June 15, New York Times. In the last paragraph of the article, he was surprised to see a casual reference to himself as "shortly to be replaced."

The Times article attributed this information to no one, which is a standard practice in diplomatic reporting. For instance, in the same vein, perhaps this is the place to say that the U.S. ambassador to Honduras, Mariucci Jaramillo, is also shortly to be replaced. Who says? Sources. That's how the game is played.

On Monday, June 16, Ortiz called William G. Bowdler, the assistant secretary of state for Inter-American affairs, and asked him what was going on. Bowdler said he would come down in a couple of weeks to talk to Ortiz. Instead, Ortiz came to Washington and got the word he was through in Guatemala.

Then someone in the State Department sympathetic to Ortiz got into the leaking act. In the papers of Saturday, June 28, appeared a story saying that Ortiz was being recalled because of a bitter policy dispute. The stories quoted a long classified cable from Ortiz to Secretary of State Edmund S. Muskie in which Ortiz defends his pol-

icies and sharply attacks the Lucas Garcia regime for engaging in "heavy-handed repression in dealing with political dissidents."

That leak adds a strange twist to the story, in that it constitutes the strongest statement on record against the Guatemalan government by an American official — the very official widely thought to be soft on that government. So, it is thought, Ortiz' replacement, George W. Landau, now ambassador to Chile, will go in with everyone in Guatemala confused about where the United States stands

The Washington Star

Sunday, July 12, 1981

Latin Policy Posts at State Purged of All Holdovers

By David Wood

Washington Star Staff Writer

In a sweep of the State Department's Latin America bureau, the Reagan administration has removed three deputy assistant secretaries for ideological reasons, a left-wing lobbying group has charged.

The State Department confirmed that John Bushnell, James Cheek and Samuel D. Eaton have been replaced at the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs. Cheek and Eaton are temporarily stationed in the bureau's congressional, human rights and public affairs office, while Bushnell is now completing final assignments as deputy assistant secretary.

One of the replacements is Gordon Sumner, a retired Army general who as the former chairman of the Inter-American Defense Board took a generally hard line against leftist movements in Latin America.

The other two replacements, Stephen Bosworth and Everett E. Briggs, are both career Foreign Service officers, the State Department said.

Cheek said he "refuses to credit" conservatives with his removal, which the State Department contends is normal duty rotation. However, he said an ideological pruning of the State Department could have "a chilling effect" on the conduct of American foreign policy.

The personnel changes, which leave the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs with no holdovers from the tumultuous period of U.S.-Latin American relations of the past six months, were termed "a bloody purge" by Larry Birns of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs.

Birns asserted that the replacement of the three, along with the resignations or replacements of Assistant Secretary William G. Bowdler and former ambassadors Robert White and Lawrence Pezzullo, were the result of pressure from right-wing groups both in the United States and in Latin America.

The Boston Globe JULY 6, 1980

US to replace Guatemala envoy

By Stephen Kinzer
Globe Correspondent

Frank V. Ortiz, US ambassador to Guatemala, will leave his post before the end of the summer and is likely to be replaced by George Landau, US envoy to Chile, according to informed sources in Washington.

Ortiz lost a bureaucratic battle to keep his job last week when the State Department announced he was being recalled from the sensitive post he has held for less than a year. He was widely viewed as a supporter of Guatemala's rightist military government, and human rights activists had been seeking his removal almost from the moment he arrived in Guatemala City last summer.

Since the US-backed coup that installed the military in power in Guatemala in 1954, American ambassadors have traditionally been sympathetic toward the regime. But as violence and terror have escalated in the embattled Central American republic in recent months, the State Department has been trying to put pressure on the government to liberalize. One US official privately refers to the general's ruling Guatemala as "the last of the dinosaurs."

Ortiz never appeared to share the State Department's growing discomfort with the regime of Guatemala's president, Gen. Romeo Lucas Garcia. As a result, he became a target of opponents of the Lucas government, which has been accused of tolerating and even sponsoring thousands of assassinations since it was installed in 1978.

"He was the wrong man in the wrong country," said Lawrence Birns of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, a Washington-based lobby that pressed for Ortiz' replacement. "He was not a strong communicator of American human rights values. He was too accommodating to the situation in Guatemala."

Not only did he fail to read the gravity of the polarization there, but he was openly unsympathetic to moderate reformers who were desperate for the support of the US embassy as a kind of security blanket.

Frank V. Ortiz 'was the wrong man in the wrong country. He was not a strong communicator of American human rights values. He was too accommodating to the situation.' — Lawrence Birns of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs

A US official who asked to remain anonymous said Ortiz lost his post because "he was too identified with the government down there" and because "some people felt his reporting was one-sided."

In Guatemala, Ortiz never gained the confidence of the political opposition, one of whose leaders told *The Globe* in February that "we don't even dream that he would understand our cause." He did not seek out leaders of opposition groups because, he explained, it was important for the United States not to undercut the existing government. He reportedly expressed privately the fear that the ruling generals might be overthrown by an even more rightist faction of the military.

Several knowledgeable observers said Ortiz committed a fatal blunder last March when he invited an American destroyer to pay a call on Guatemala without informing his Washington superiors. The State Department publicly denied that the vessel, the USS Manley, was in Guatemalan waters but later was forced to retract that denial.

"The Manley incident sealed his fate," one Washington expert said, "because it gave his enemies at State the ammunition they needed to hit the kill."

A State Department spokesman denied that Ortiz was being recalled because of political differences, explaining that "we have a dialogue here and in Guatemala about our relations. Our embassy is in contact with a wide range of groups in Guatemala. At the State Department, we have received various groups which have diverse opinions to discuss the situation."

Landau has presided over the sharp deterioration of US-Chile relations, largely because of Chile's refusal to cooperate with US prosecutors in solving the murder of Orlando Letelier, the Chilean dissident whose car was blown up in Washington several years ago.