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Guatemalan Court Convicts National Police Chief

Commander of Infamous 1984 Fernando Garcia Disappearance

Archive Analyst Testifies on Key U.S. Documentary Evidence

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Washington, D.C., September 24, 2013 -- On September 20, a Guatemalan tribunal convicted the former director of the National Police of Guatemala, retired Col. Hector Bol de la Cruz, and his subordinate Jorge Alberto Gomez Lopez for the 1984 disappearance of student and labor leader Edgar Fernando Garcia.

The verdict broke new ground in the case of Fernando Garcia's abduction and presumed murder, by condemning senior police officials for their role in ordering, overseeing, and then concealing the crime. The trial also gave the prosecution the opportunity to introduce eyewitness testimony from a fellow senior police officer indicating that after his capture, Edgar Fernando Garcia was turned over to members of Guatemalan army intelligence. The revelation prompted the court to order the investigation to continue.

National Security Archive senior analyst Kate Doyle was asked by the prosecution to provide an analysis of the declassified U.S. documents the National Security Archive has obtained over years of Freedom of Information Act requests. The communications alerted Washington to a surge in the disappearance of students and labor leaders in early 1984, including Fernando Garcia. "Government security services have employed assassination to eliminate persons suspected of involvement with the guerrillas or who are otherwise left-wing in orientation," wrote U.S. officials, pointing in particular to the army's "notorious presidential intelligence service (Archivos)" and the National Police, "who have traditionally considered labor activists to be communists."

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