

3/15/75

# U.S. Says Lisbon Retracts Charge of CIA Coup Role

Post 3/15/75  
Reuter

A senior Portuguese official has privately retracted charges that the United States was involved in the recent attempted coup against the military government there, a senior State Department official told Congress yesterday.

L. Bruce Laingen, deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs, testified that Gen. Otelo de Carvalho, head of the security forces of the portuguese military government had retracted the charge in a private conversation with U.S. ambassador Frank Carlucci.

Gen. Carvalho had also given assurances of safety for Carlucci and the entire U.S. mission, Laingen told the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on international political affairs.

Soon after the attempted coup, Gen. Carvalho charged that the CIA was involved and added that he could not guarantee Carlucci's safety. The statement on Carlucci was publicly refuted by Portugal's information minister Wednesday.

Laingen strongly reiterated denials of U.S. involvement in the attempted overthrow, and he said he was encouraged that the suggestions had not government in its efforts to improve conditions in Portugal," United Press International quoted Laingen as saying. "We prescribe no models for Portugal." "in responsible

quarters of the Portuguese government in recent days."

Laingen added that the United States hoped the military government will hold elections April 12 as originally planned and "our hope would be moderate political forces would have a strong voice."

"We have demonstrated in public statements and privately that we support the efforts of the government. Also, we have been and are providing tangible support for the

Michael Getler of The Washington Post added:

Privately, U.S. officials were saying that the attempted right-wing coup could not have come at a worse time.

In the weeks before it, moderate forces, appeared to be gaining strength, a sign which U.S. officials welcomed, not only because Portugal is still a NATO member but because that country leases a strategically important airbase at Lajes in the Azores to the United States.

The attempt by right-wing elements to upset the government is seen here as undoubtedly strengthening leftist, including Communist elements and weakening the moderates.

The U.S. base in the Azores has been of critical importance as a refueling point for air transport to the Middle East. It played a crucial role in the emergency

airlift of supplies to Israel in October 1973.

The base lease, however, expired in February 1974. While the United States continues to use the facility, negotiations for a new base agreement lagged as Portugal went through its government upheavals.

The last negotiating session was in January.

Officials concede they are not sure whether Portugal would allow use of the base to help supply Israel in another crisis.

As a precaution, the United States for several months now has been training transport crews in aerial refueling so they can make the flight non-stop, carrying less cargo.