

Laird Cites Stability of Latin Juntas

By Juan J. Waite
United Press International

Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird considers the military "the only cohesive group" in most Latin American countries, but denies that the Pentagon is encouraging military takeovers through its training programs, congressional testimony showed yesterday.

At the same time, the Defense Department warns that the United States is losing ground and will continue to lose it to European arms salesmen as long as U.S. arms sales to Latin America are limited by Congress.

These statements were made by top Pentagon officials, including Laird, during secret hearings held last March by the House Appropriations Committee. A heavily censored transcript of these hearings was released yesterday.

"I think it is important for us to bear in mind that the military is the only cohesive group in many of the countries of Latin America and that they are very important," Laird testified.

"No part of the U.S. training given Latin American officers is in any way related to overthrow of governments, but on the contrary is aimed at maintaining internal security and stability in order that economic progress can be achieved."

See LAIRD, A12, Col. 1

Laird Cites Latin Juntas' Stability

LAIRD, From A1

Laird said the political attitude of the Latin American military was a product of the environment in which they live. "Intervention by the military when it judges that the government has failed has been a widely accepted reaction in Latin America," he said.

U.S. military programs in Latin America "cannot be expected to negate the political beliefs and attitudes of a lifetime," he said. He cited the Nixon administration policy to the effect that "we have a clear preference for free and democratic processes, but we deal with governments as they are."

Another witness, Christian Chapman, of the State Department's Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, said one of the purposes of U.S. military training programs in Latin Amer-

ica was "to improve the professionalism of the Latin American officers and men, and to also improve their technical capabilities, which has some side uses in civilian economy."

"But it is not to encourage them to assume political power," Chapman testified.

At present, the military controls — directly or indirectly — the governments of 11 Latin American nations: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Ecuador, Panama, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil and Peru.

On the issue of military sales, Laird said it was "a great mistake" by Congress to have limited the United States to a \$75 million ceiling.

(Since those hearings, the administration has doubled that ceiling to \$150 million, to the distress of a number of congressmen).

"This limitation that we

have on sales has meant that Latin America has turned more and more to the French and the British suppliers, and they are moving in there with ever-increasing efforts," Laird said.

The same was said by Air Force Lt. Gen. Robert H. Warren, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Assistance and Sales.

He said that since 1968, European nations have sold Latin America armaments valued at over \$850 million. "A major share of these sales, particularly for aircraft, would have accrued to the United States if we had modified our restrictive policies at an earlier date," Warren said.

"I think most countries in Latin America would prefer to deal with the United States," he said adding that it would be "very beneficial" to the United States if it could start selling arms again to Latin America.

Supported by Regime

Dominican Police Using Gang to Subdue Leftists

By Irwin Goodwin

Special to The Washington Post

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic — The government is giving tacit support to a band of armed bullyboys who are being used by the national police to subdue leftists here.

At least 50 leftists reportedly have been murdered and hundreds more assaults or abducted since the appearance of these thugs who call themselves the Anti-Communist and Anti-Terrorist Democratic Youth Front, but who are known here as "La Banda" (The Band).

Ramon Perez Martinez, identified as La Banda's director general, explained in a televised interview Saturday night that the organi-

zation is "a guarantee of national tranquility." He claimed it is supported by "democratic leaders" but denied that President Joaquin Balaguer or the police gave it assistance or approval.

Perez attacked former President Juan Bosch as the principal leader of the country's Communists and greatest source of La Banda's friction with the press.

Admitting that he had once been a Communist, Perez insisted that "the only reason our people and our police can walk freely about the streets is because of our activities."

See BANDA, A16, Col. 1

BANDA, From A1

Indeed, since La Banda's guerrilla-like hit-and-run forays began most of the streets of the capital, as well as many of the restaurants and movie houses, have been nearly empty at night. Visitors, mainly tourists and businessmen, are surprised to find they have the city virtually to themselves after dark.

La Banda's terrorist tactics began in the schools and universities. They charged into classrooms, ripping books, smashing equipment and intimidating teachers and students.

The gang's first public statement claimed that its aim was to help police capture "all the murderers who shield themselves behind Communist banners to commit abuses and walk the streets like innocent lambs."

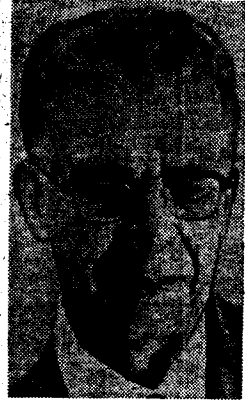
Since May, the main thrust of gang attacks has been on the crowded slum sections in northern parts of the city, where unemployment and opposition to Balaguer's five-year-old regime run highest.

Caches of arms from the 1965 civil war are said to still exist in these areas. More than 100 persons were reportedly shot to death last year, many of the victims being members of the police and army.

Areas 'Pacified'

Police have been reluctant in the past to take part in search and seizure operations in these areas. However, La Banda's raids seem to have "pacified" these areas — at least temporarily.

According to one source, who said he was a member



JOAQUIN BELAGER

... no overt support

of La Banda, gang members were recruited by police undercover agents among the unemployed, offering each \$150 a month. In contrast, an army enlisted man averages about half that amount, while the country's per capita income is only \$295 annually.

"For the wage," said the source, who said he earlier had belonged to a Maoist group, "we have to turn in our political friends. After all, we can identify them best. Sometimes someone will accuse or even kill an enemy to, even, an old score."

Political Vendettas

Vendettas in the Dominican Republic often approach Sicilian intensity. Prof. Antonio Zanglun, a psychiatrist at the University of Santo Domingo, observes that most crimes here are not for romantic or economic reasons but political ones. The cause is in the legacy of in-

ternice strife and blood feuds during the brutal 31-year regime of Dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina.

Though Balaguer argues that he knows nothing about La Banda and that the country possesses many bands on the right and left, many observers, including members of the diplomatic community, believe he has given it his support, not only as a successful counterforce against the leftists but as a counterbalance between the army and the police.

These sources say that the inspiration for La Banda came from Gen. Enrique Perez y Perez, 48, a coldly efficient career officer who became chief of police last January.

His opponent, both personally and professionally, is Gen. Neit Nivar Seijas, 46, a longtime confidante of Balaguer.

Army Vs. Police

Nivar and his army cronies are said to view La Banda as a special "death squad" operating at the bidding of the police, which, under certain circumstances, could turn on the coup-prone army hierarchy.

In late July, 14 members of La Banda were arrested in the town of San Cristobal on the orders of Army Col. Jose Pimentel, who was under the command of Nivar. For this action, Pimentel was harshly criticized by Balaguer for interfering in what the president termed police functions having nothing to do with the army.

Pimentel subsequently was transferred. The incident is interpreted as a victory for Perez y Perez over

Nivar and the other 20 army generals.

A few days after this incident, the Dominican daily El Sol published a confidential memo circulated by Balaguer to top police and military brass. It charged that high-ranking officers were using their positions for conspiratorial maneuvers by both the political right and left against the nation's legitimate institutions. The officers were not identified, but the memo was viewed by the newspaper and other observers as directed specifically at Nivar.

Defections From Banda

Meanwhile, not all has been smooth for La Banda's strongmen. Over the past four months eight of its estimated 400 members have sought asylum in the Mexican embassy here. In statements to the press they claimed they had been recruited by the police after they were arrested and accused of "a series of deeds we did not commit."

One self-confessed member, Fernando Aquino Mateo, speaking from the safety of the embassy, claimed he had taken refuge there after police Lt. Oscar Nunez Pena ordered him to kill the secretary general of the taxi drivers' union and the managing editor of El Nacional, a left-of-center newspaper.

Lt. Nunez has been publicly named as the chief of La Banda.

Wary of the political killings and the latest wave of violence, many Dominicans worried that Balaguer may be unable to control the situation.