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LA PAZ, Bolivia AP - President Rene Barrientos has confirmed that the American Central Intelligence Agency was involved in the 1967 antiguerrilla drive that led to the death of Ernesto Che Guevara, a Bolivian newspaper reported.

The daily Presencia, in a series "The CIA in Bolivia," said Barrientos claimed he had no knowledge of the CIA activity at the time. It said he declined comment on an army general's allegation that copies of Guevara's guerrilla diary may have been spirited to Washington before a Bolivian Cabinet minister sparked a scandal by leaking it to Communist Cuba.

No presidential comment on the Presencia articles was available.

There have been widespread reports that CIA agents were among North American advisers who helped the Bolivian army defeat Guevara's guerrilla band in the Bolivian interior in October 1967. The Argentine-born Castroite leader was shot to death.

Much of the Presencia series stemmed from testimony at violation of trust proceedings against ex-Interior Minister Antonio Arguedas. Arguedas has claimed he worked with the CIA but became fed up with its alleged interference in Bolivian affairs, and sent the diary to Cuba.

The case against Arguedas lost strength earlier in the week when a top army officer, Gen. Joaquin Zenteno, testified that two CIA agents with presidential credentials were allowed to make photocopies of the Guevara diary to send to Washington even before the diary was in Bolivian government hands.

Of the credentials given the alleged agents, Barrientos was quoted as saying: "I have never known these gentlemen as CIA members but as officials who came to train our men."

Presencia quoted Barrientos as saying the CIA involvement came as a surprise to him but, "the president spends a large part of his time in other types of activities and cannot always be informed of all details."

On Tuesday, the armed forces commander in chief, Gen. Alfredo Ovando, said: "If CIA agents were among the North American advisers in the antiguerrilla fight, the army was unaware of it."

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