

Guatemala

Response to Information Request Number:	GTM99001.ASY
Date:	2 November 1998
Subject:	Guatemala: The Significance Of The Term <i>Judiciales</i> And The Context In Which It Has Been Used
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC
Keywords:	Police, Intelligence Services, Torture, Extrajudicial Executions, Disappearances, Arbitrary Arrests, Corruption

Query:

Is the term *Judiciales* used in Guatemala? If so, in what context has it been used?

Response:

The following information was provided by *Inforpress Centroamericana*, a news and analysis service based in Guatemala City, Guatemala.

The name *Judiciales* goes back to before the dictatorship of Jorge Ubico, which ended in the early 1940s. The name has persisted as a popular reference to the assorted secret police agencies over the years. They have all been under the authority of the *Direccion General de Policía*, and were especially notorious during the military regime of President Gen. Romeo Lucas García. At that time they were a key instrument of state repression, known for illicit detention, torture and disappearances. They were also important sources of corruption, and two of the commando leaders García Redondo y Valiente Tellez at one point initiated an internal war that led to several deaths of their officers and bodyguards. Tellez, who lost an eye from a gunshot at the time, died recently of old age, after returning from exile several years ago to manage a private security company. García Redondo is still alive, and has been active in local politics in the eastern department of Jutiapa.

Sources say that during the repressive years, the army worked closely with the *Judiciales*, often transferring tortured prisoners close to death over to the *Judiciales* as a means of ridding themselves of the problem. The *Judiciales* were known for driving Blue Toyota Jeep vehicles, and Ford Broncos, usually without license plates. If you were seen taken into custody in one of these vehicles, the chances of being released alive were remote.

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Under military governments the national police headquarters had pits in the basement for torturing victims, according to ex-Vice-Minister of Interior Mario Cifuentes. The name *Judiciales* continues to signify illicit detention, torture and impunity in the population's collective memory, although the police reforms and the establishment of the new *Policía Nacional Civil* (PNC), have gone a long way to bring to an end the counterinsurgency and political repression function of the

police. In recent years human rights attention has been directed at the army's Presidential Chief of Staff's offices as the "dirty works" department of the security forces. This office (the *Estado Mayor Presidencial*) is widely viewed as involved in several well known human rights cases in the past eight years (Myrna Mack, Mincho), and is mentioned by some analysts as a suspect in the Bishop Gerardi killing earlier this year.

References:

Inforpress Centroamericana. <inforpre@guate.net>. 1 November 1998.

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