

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

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January 12, 1983

Mr. Paul Varan
UPI Foreign Editor
220 E. 42 Street
New York, New York

Dear Sir:

I am writing you about a recent and unfortunate incident which concerns your correspondent in Tegucigalpa.

On December 28 of last year UPI reported from Tegucigalpa that I was to be relieved of my responsibilities as ambassador. This, of course, was patently false. Apparently your correspondent based his report on the headlines of a local paper which said "John Negroponte Leaving Honduras." A short article on an inside page expanded on the headlines.

This headline appeared on December 28, which is, in Latin countries, the Feast of the Holy Innocents. This day, in its secular aspect, corresponds to our April Fools' Day. The paper in which it appeared, Tiempo, on that day was called Tiempito (The Spanish diminutive). In other words, the section of the paper on which the report of my leaving appeared was a hoax, done to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Innocents and clearly understood as such by those familiar with the local scene.

This section also reported that the Ortega brothers and Jaime Wheelock had been purged in Nicaragua, that the three Honduran vice-presidents had resigned, and other fanciful and totally improbable stories. In a box, prominently displayed on the last page of this section, an explanation was proffered for the imaginary stories. This explanation gave the history of some pranks commonly pulled on the Day of the Innocents, including many by the newspaper.

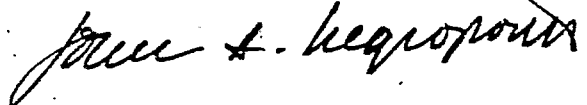
Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this whole affair was that your correspondent called the Public Affairs Officer at the Embassy and was told that the story was categorically untrue and that I, as Ambassador, would remain in Honduras. Your reporter chose to ignore his words.

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
() Release () Excise () Deny () Declassify
Date 6/2/98 Exemption _____

It is in view of the foregoing that I find the UPI story of such concern. The Embassy denied the report. The paper which originally published the story took precautions to demonstrate that all was in jest. Unfortunately your reporter heeded neither the Embassy's denial nor the paper's explanation. We all know the result.

I would be pleased to discuss this matter with you or other representatives of UPI at any time. I can be reached at my office through Area Code 504-32-31-10.

Sincerely yours,



John D. Negroponte
Ambassador

cc: Mr. Manuel Rocha
Honduran Desk
Department of State

USIS/10 - RJ Cellahin/Lfc.