

Vice-President Casas Resigns

By Gillian Gillers
Tico Times
September 24, 2007

Kevin Casas stepped down from his posts as Second Vice-President and Planning Minister Saturday.

He has come under fire for a memo he wrote to President Oscar Arias recommending questionable and possibly illegal tactics in the government's campaign for the Central American Free-Trade Agreement with the United States (CAFTA). The memo was leaked to the University of Costa Rica (UCR) weekly newspaper, which broke the story Sept. 6.

The document, co-written by National Liberation Party (PLN) legislator Fernando Sánchez, suggests that the government manipulate voters, blackmail mayors, and improperly use public resources to boost its CAFTA campaign (TT, Sept. 14).

The memo has fallen under a national and political spotlight. The anti-CAFTA Citizen Action Party (PAC) and the pro-CAFTA Libertarian Movement Party have insisted that Casas resign. The Alliance for Yes on CAFTA and the pro-CAFTA Liberation Party have distanced themselves from the memo's authors and rejected their ideas.

Casas decided last week to temporarily leave the Planning Ministry while its Internal Auditing Office investigates whether the state improperly used public money. He had planned to return after the investigation ended. The Supreme Elections Tribunal (TSE) is also looking into whether Casas violated the Electoral Code by becoming involved in party politics.

Arias said in a statement that he accepts Casas' resignation.

“I regret losing one of my best ministers,” Arias said. “In the government we have lost a capable, efficient and very hard-working person.”