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From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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From: OpsNewsTicker
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To: NEWS-WHA; NEWS-Mahogany
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Subject: Raul Castro names new Cuban defense minister (AP)

HAVANA - (AP) State media says President Raul Castro has named a close confidante as Cuba's new defense minister.

An announcement read on Tuesday's nightly newscast said Leopoldo Cintra Frias, who joined Castro and his brother's rebel movement in his early teens and has been a soldier ever since, will assume the important position atop the Communist-run island's armed forces.

The 70-year-old Cintra has been serving as first vice-defense minister since the death in September of Julio Casas Reguero, the island's former defense minister.

Casas' remains were laid to rest this weekend at a mausoleum for fallen revolutionaries.

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