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~~(S//OC/NF)~~ **SUBJ: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON FORMATION OF RAPID REACTION BRIGADES**

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~~(S//OC/NF)~~ 1. [Redacted] IN EARLY MAY 1991, SENIOR OFFICIALS OF CUBA'S MINISTRY OF INTERIOR (MININT), RESPONDING TO CUBAN PRESIDENT FIDEL ((CASTRO'S)) FEARS THAT POLITICAL OPPOSITION GROUPS WOULD USE THE OCCASION OF CUBA'S AUGUST 1991 HOSTING OF THE PAN-AMERICAN GAMES TO DEMONSTRATE AGAINST HIS REGIME, ORGANIZED NEW "RAPID REACTION" BRIGADES WHOSE MISSION WAS TO CONTROL QUICKLY ANY PUBLIC DISTURBANCE THAT MIGHT ARISE DURING THE GAMES. OBSESSED BY HIS BELIEF THAT FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES WOULD SWARM TO THE ISLAND TO MEET THEIR AGENTS DURING THE GAMES, AND CERTAIN THAT HIS OPPONENTS WOULD SEE THE PRESENCE

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OF HUNDREDS OF JOURNALISTS IN CUBA TO COVER THE GAMES AS AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY TO CRITICIZE AND EMBARRASS THE REGIME, CASTRO WANTED A MECHANISM ON HAND THAT COULD EFFECTIVELY SILENCE THE DISSIDENTS. CASTRO APPOINTED A VICE MINISTER OF MININT, AS WELL AS DIVISION GENERAL CARLOS ((FERNANDEZ)) GONDIN, A REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES (MINFAR) OFFICER AND CHIEF OF THE GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF COUNTERINTELLIGENCE (DGCI), TO ORGANIZE AND DIRECT THESE UNITS.

(S//OC/NF) 2. ELEMENTS FOR THESE NEW BRIGADES WERE DRAWN FROM MININT, INCLUDING THE GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE'S (DGI) DEPARTMENT OF ACTIVE MEASURES, FROM MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS WITHIN MINFAR, AND FROM THE COMMITTEES FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE REVOLUTION (CDR). EACH BRIGADE IS HEADED BY A MININT OFFICER AND INCLUDES AN OFFICIAL FROM STATE SECURITY, AS WELL AS OTHER "PERSONS OF CONFIDENCE." THE RAPID REACTION BRIGADES WERE DESIGNED TO ACT AS A KIND OF "SHOCK FORCE," RESPONDING RUTHLESSLY TO THE FIRST SIGNS OF ANY POLITICAL DEMONSTRATION. DESIRING WHERE POSSIBLE TO AVOID BLATANT GOVERNMENT STRONG-ARM TACTICS CERTAIN TO BE FILMED BY THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA DURING THE GAMES, REGIME LEADERS WANTED IT TO APPEAR THAT ANY REPRESSIVE MEASURES HAD ORIGINATED FROM ORDINARY CUBAN PEOPLE, I.E. HAD POPULAR SUPPORT. CONSEQUENTLY, A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WERE ASSIGNED TO THESE UNITS. THE WOMEN, MOSTLY DRAWN FROM "SPECIAL TROOPS", WERE SELECTED BECAUSE THEY ARE HIGHLY TRAINED, EFFECTIVE IN MARTIAL ARTS, AND YET APPEAR TO OUTSIDERS TO BE WOMEN OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. UNIT MEMBERS, WEARING CIVILIAN CLOTHES, CIRCULATED AMONG CROWDS THROUGHOUT THE GAMES, READY TO RESPOND AT THE APPROPRIATE MOMENT.

(S//OC/NF) 3. ALTHOUGH INITIALLY CONCEIVED IN ANTICIPATION OF THE PAN-AMERICAN GAMES, THE RAPID REACTION BRIGADES HAVE BECOME A PERMANENT STRUCTURE WITHIN MININT. AN ADDITIONAL POLITICAL OBJECTIVE UNDERLYING THE FORMATION OF THE NEW UNITS WAS TO OBTAIN A NEW PLEDGE OF LOYALTY TO THE REGIME FROM BRIGADE COMMANDERS AND MEMBERS. THE CASTRO GOVERNMENT BELIEVED THAT THOSE WHO SIGNED THE PLEDGE OF PARTICIPATION IN THE BRIGADES COMMITTED THEMSELVES FURTHER TO THE REGIME; THOSE WHO REFUSED OR RESISTED THE NEW ASSIGNMENTS DEMONSTRATED THEIR UNTRUSTWORTHINESS IN THE VIEW OF THE REGIME.

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(S//OC/NF) 4. ON 6 SEPTEMBER 1991 THE RAPID REACTION BRIGADES WENT INTO ACTION AGAINST A DEMONSTRATION MOUNTED BY DISSIDENT GROUPS AGITATING FOR THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND OBSERVATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. SEVERAL OF THE DEMONSTRATORS WERE SEVERELY BEATEN IN THE ENCOUNTER. THE UNITS WERE DEPLOYED FOR A SECOND TIME IN SEPTEMBER WHEN A RIOT STARTED IN REACTION TO A POLICE BEATING OF A STUDENT.

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