

NSC BRIEFING

21 May 1958

LATIN AMERICA--DR. EISENHOWER'S TRIP

- I. Chance of embarrassing incidents, possibly accompanied by violence, during Dr. Eisenhower's trip appears greatest in Panama and Guatemala and exists to some extent in other four countries, although there is now no evidence of definite plans for Communist or nationalist inspired demonstrations.
- II. In Panama, last stop on Dr Eisenhower's trip (he arrived 1 July for 4 days or more), a mounting nationalist campaign for increased control of and benefits from Canal is spurred by deteriorating economic and political conditions.
  - A. On 19 May 1,500 students in Panama City demonstrated against poor educational facilities. In struggle with National Guard (only armed force in Panama), one student was killed and 30 injured.
    1. Overt support for students came from at least two labor unions. Ex-President Arias almost certainly giving them covert support in effort to oust Pres de la Guardia.
    2. Thus far no anti-US overtones in disturbances, but in his efforts against de la Guardia, Arias may canalize student unrest against US.
    3. Early this month students raised Panamanian flags in Canal Zone to dramatize Panamian sovereignty claims.
    4. President lacks strong support of his own and will find it increasingly hard to resist pressures for demands on US.

Document No. 13
No Change in Class. <input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Declassified
Class. Changed to: TS S C
Next Review Date:
Auth: 00 9256
Date: 2/07/80

5. National Guard, though best security force in countries to be visited, had difficulty controlling 19 May rioting.

III. In Guatemala, first stop on trip (15-19 June), main danger is from Communists and pro-Communists skillfully exploiting strong nationalism.

A. Ydigoras, thus far weak and vacillating, has made little effort control Communists who daily becoming bolder. He did tell US Ambassador that he would soon take unspecified anti-Communist measures.

B. Dr. Eisenhower's visit will immediately precede 24-26 June anniversaries of past student revolutionary exploits--a period often in the past used to justify excesses by Communist-infiltrated student groups.

C. Ydigoras admitted that traditional student acts make last half of June a sort of "Ides of March" for Guatemala and that perhaps July would be better for the Eisenhower visit. However, he said he still foresees no serious problems for visit as scheduled.

D. Ambassador not so confident; believes trouble likely if present trend continues and doubts (as does Ydigoras) that Guatemalan security forces can be relied upon.

E. Pro-Communist student newspaper has already implicitly threatened Dr. Eisenhower with violence.

IV. In other four countries, threat of trouble appears less, but still exists. Local security forces in all four are not considered adequate for preventing serious disorders.

- A. In El Salvador, Eisenhower visit already being bitterly attacked by small but well-organized Communist group and second-level foreign office officials have privately expressed concern over possible demonstrations during visit.
- B. In Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, there are also small Communist groups with a potential for causing trouble.