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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

1 December 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Reports of Impending Revolutionary Action
Against the Governments of Nicaragua and
Costa Rica*

1. For some time there have been reports of an impending attempt to overthrow the Somoza regime in Nicaragua. A Nicaraguan official has recently alleged that this attempt will be initiated by an incursion from Costa Rica on 7 December. Meanwhile, the Costa Rican government has begun to express alarm regarding alleged preparations in Venezuela for an attack on Costa Rica similar to that launched from Nicaragua in January 1955. [redacted] reports that such an attack is being organized in Venezuela, that it will consist of an internal uprising at San Jose in conjunction with a landing at Puerto Limon, and that it is scheduled for 8 December.

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* This memorandum has been informally coordinated with DDP/WH [redacted] and OCI [redacted], but has not been coordinated with the IAC agencies.

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2. It is unlikely that Presidents Somoza, of Nicaragua, and Perez Jimenez, of Venezuela, will ever be reconciled to the continued existence of the Figueres regime in Costa Rica. President Figueres cordially reciprocates their sentiments, but lacks their capabilities. It might be supposed that all three presidents would be restrained by their experience a year ago, which involved mortal peril for Figueres, acute embarrassment for Somoza, and great chagrin for Perez Jimenez.

3. President Somoza has dominated Nicaragua for twenty years, through his control of the Guardia Nacional. Conservative Nicaraguans desire a change and fear that, if it is not accomplished soon by conservative elements, it will be accomplished eventually, with violence, by radicals. The approaching presidential election (November 1956) is a spur to action to prevent Somoza from perpetuating his regime. There is no indication, however, that Somoza has lost control of the Guardia, the source of his power, or that the movement against him amounts, as yet, to more than talk. In particular, there is no evidence of actual preparations in Costa Rica for an incursion into Nicaragua on 7 December.

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4. Investigations by Embassy Caracas have tended to disprove the circumstantial details of Costa Rican allegations regarding hostile preparations in Venezuela, but nevertheless there is reason to believe that an attack on the Figueres regime similar to that of last January is being organized under the patronage of President Perez Jimenez.

5. The Costa Rican government is now preparing to meet such an attack. If it should occur, it is likely that the Costa Rican people would rally in support of Figueres, as they did in January, and that Costa Rica would demand the immediate intervention of the Organization of American States, as before.

6. To contemplate such an operation, President Perez Jimenez would have to believe that he could prevent effective intervention by the O.A.S. With Costa Rica alerted, it is not likely that he could obtain a decision before the O.A.S. could act. The rationalization given by one source is that the O.A.S. would hesitate to deal with the President of Venezuela as summarily as it did with the President of Nicaragua last January. Perez Jimenez is not a modest man: this may represent his own opinion.

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7. In this connection, the coincidence between the alleged date for an attack from Costa Rica on Nicaragua (7 December) and the independently reported date for the attack on Costa Rica (8 December) may be significant: that is, a staged attack on Nicaragua may be offered as justification for Nicaraguan and Venezuelan support of a real attack on Costa Rica.

8. It is unlikely that the O.A.S. could be imposed upon in this manner. Nicaragua and Venezuela would expect the sympathy of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Peru, but not their firm support. On the other hand, Mexico, Ecuador, and Uruguay would probably be outspoken in support of Figueres. Even last January Venezuela was a minority of one in support of Nicaragua. Political developments since then, particularly those in Argentina and Brazil, have been favorable for Figueres.

9. In sum:

- a. The Somoza regime in Nicaragua appears to be in no immediate danger, although a crisis is likely during 1956,

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- b. Somoza and Perez Jimenez are probably conspiring to overthrow the Figueres regime in Costa Rica. It would be an ill-considered and probably unsuccessful operation, but their animosity and capacity for self-delusion could lead them into it.
- c. The Organization of American States probably could and would intervene as promptly and effectively as in January 1955.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES: ^{25X1A9a}

SHERMAN KENT
Assistant Director
National Estimates

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