

OCI No. 3225/63

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
9 December 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Cuban Subversion in Latin America

1. To Fidel Castro and his lieutenants, the future of the Cuban revolution is indissolubly linked to the "anti-imperialist struggle" in the rest of Latin America. The Cuban revolution, in their view, is simply the first victory in the wider revolution that is "inevitably" to sweep the hemisphere. Moreover, Cuban influence and assistance, they believe, can speed up the Latin American revolutionary process. And it is one of the basic policies of the regime to do everything that can be done without undue risk to speed up this process. It has also become apparent in recent months that the greater the external and internal pressures on the Castro regime, the higher the degree of urgency that is assigned to this Cuban effort in Latin America. Castro, in short, appears convinced of the undesirability of attempting to build "socialism in one country" of the hemisphere; in his view, revolutionary outbreaks elsewhere in the hemisphere are needed in order to reduce "imperialist" pressures on him and to restore the lagging momentum of his revolution at home. He probably also hopes that ultimately this course will serve to lessen his dependence on the Soviet Union.

2. These convictions of the Cuban leaders are clearly stated in a number of public pronouncements by Castro, Che Guevara, and other Cuban leaders

[REDACTED] In his speech on 28 September, for instance, Castro referred to the US-Cuban relationship as "a battle between the past and the future...a battle against time," because while the "imperialists" believe they can

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destroy the Cuban revolution, the Cuban revolutionaries believe that before that could take place "many other revolutions like ours will appear on the continent." In the most recent of a number of similar statements, Che Guevara, speaking on 24 November, stated that "our victory" in consolidating and defending the Cuban revolution will be the victory of all Latin America; the Latin American revolutionary struggle, he said, "is also our responsibility and it is part of our daily preoccupation."

3. After the failure of the Cuba-mounted invasions of several Middle American countries during Castro's first months in power in 1959, Castro turned to more subtle and less risky methods of achieving his aims. Many hundreds of Latin Americans have been brought to Cuba for ideological indoctrination and training in the practical arts of guerrilla warfare. It is estimated that in 1962 alone at least 1,000 and perhaps as many as 1,500 Latin Americans received such training in Cuba. More than that have probably come to Cuba for such training this year.

[redacted] Cuban financial assistance has been channeled to various leftist-extremist groups in the hemisphere. Cuban political and tactical guidance has been transmitted to them and Cuban propaganda has offered them incessant support. Until recently, however, the Cubans have avoided actions that risked implicating the Castro regime in direct support for Latin American revolutionaries. Leftist extremists were told that they would be expected to buy or steal their own weapons and not to expect outside assistance. The recent confirmed exception to this policy, involving the shipment of a large quantity of weapons to Venezuela, appears to demonstrate the increased sense of urgency that has in recent months pervaded the Cuban subversive drive in Latin America.

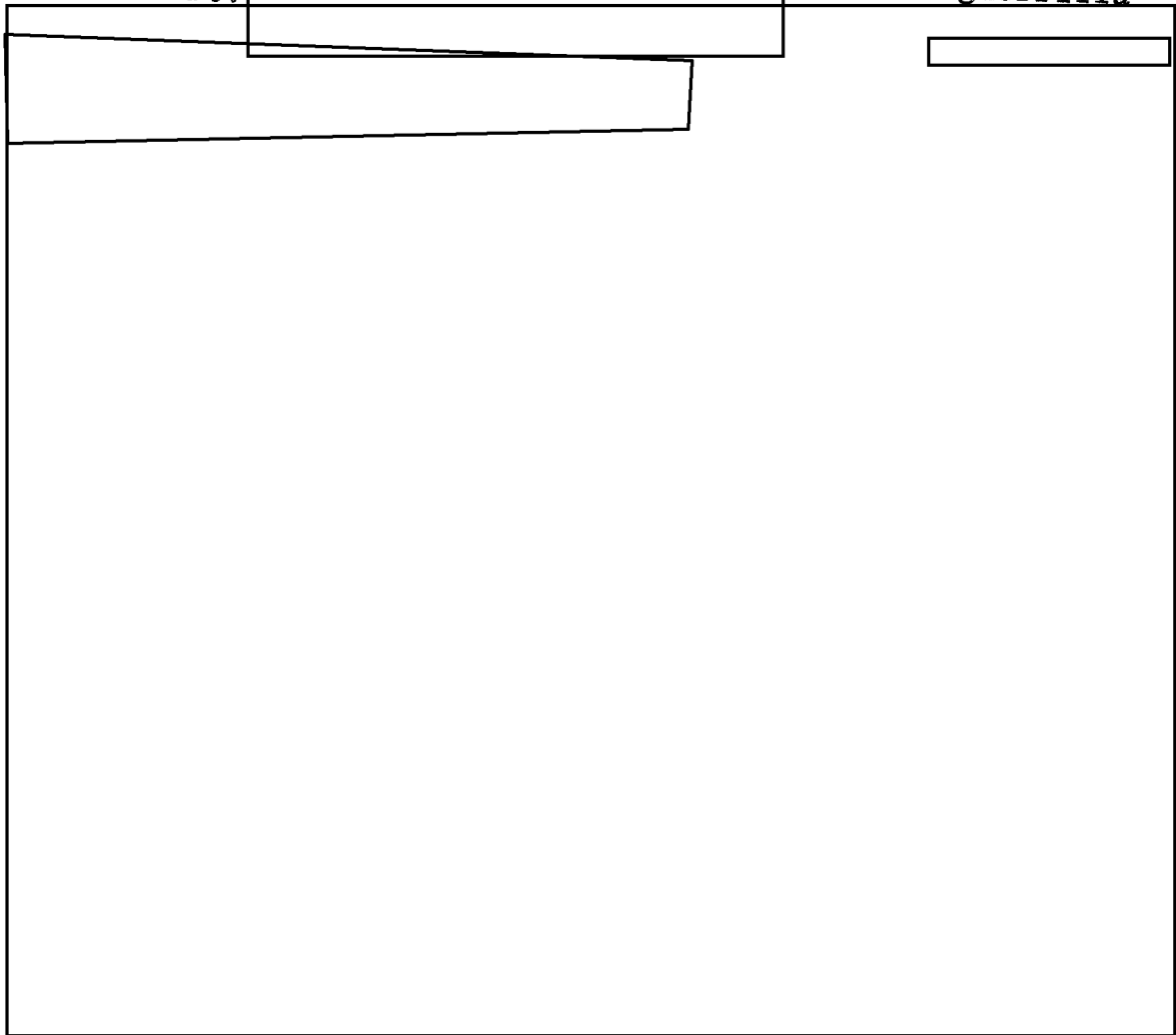
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4. The incontrovertible evidence that the large cache of arms found buried on a Venezuelan beach early last month had come from Cuba constitutes the most solid proof since 1959 of major Cuban complicity in Latin American subversive activities. The approximately three tons of weapons include light automatic rifles and submachine guns definitely identified as among those shipped to Cuba [redacted]

[redacted] There were also mortars, bazookas, recoilless rifles, and ammunition of US manufacture. Communist documents seized by Venezuelan authorities shortly after the discovery of the weapons indicate that the equipment was intended for the Venezuelan Communists' paramilitary arm, the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN). The weapons were found in Falcon State, scene of the most active FALN guerrilla effort. [redacted]



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9. Castro's subversive assets in Latin America vary greatly from country to country in organization, strength, and effectiveness. Only in Venezuela does he seem to have the capability to call on significant elements within an active revolutionary movement to step up terrorist activity when he so chooses. In addition, there are serious divisions among extreme leftist and Communist groups in many Latin American countries. The Cubans have thus far met with little apparent success in their attempts to bring about the unity of the leftist extremists in "national liberation fronts" under their control or strong influence. Their failure to accomplish this in such strategic countries as Argentina and Colombia is a serious weakness in Cuban subversive capabilities. Nevertheless, the alumni of Cuban training schools are a growing band in many countries and a significant proportion of these people can probably be considered under Cuban control.

10. In view of the apparent weakness in Castro's subversive assets in many Latin American countries, it would seem that Castro's insistence that they be committed to action in the near future risks the loss of many of these assets. This appears to be recognized by the Cuban leaders. Che Guevara has explained publicly that many "good revolutionaries" will be lost in the initial stages of the struggle. But that, in his view, is not important. What is important is that the struggle --which he grants will be lengthy--be initiated soon. In an article in the regime's major ideological journal, Cuba Socialista, in September, Guevara explained that "it is not always necessary to wait for all the conditions for revolution to exist; the insurrectionary focal point can itself create the necessary conditions." Here Guevara seems to be saying that even if the conditions in a particular country are not ripe for revolution, these conditions can be created by a determined revolutionary leadership. Guevara also stressed the importance of forcing a "bourgeois government" toward progressively more oppressive actions and violence against the people. Then, he said, the masses of the people will side with the revolutionaries and "the struggle will deepen so there can be no turning back."

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