

FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE
PANAMA BUREAU
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MPA #1039

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS
THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group
SUBJECT : Monthly Report -- Panama Bureau -- October 1981

I. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. The Bureau's file centered on Nicaragua during the month, with the Sandinist regime attacking the independent paper LA PRENSA, restricting the travel of opposition leaders, and arresting businessmen and communists. The Bureau initiated monitoring of weekend political programs carried by the opposition parties over Radio Corporacion.

Additionally, the Nicaraguans hosted a Central American anti-imperialist seminar which featured ex-CIA members Agee, Frankovich and Martinez. The resulting copy, filed to a restricted audience, was voluminous--a total of 19 takes on two main items and several smaller items.

2. As the Managua situation worsened, the Bureau's attempts to establish a remote tuning facility at the Tegucigalpa Embassy continued to meet snags. At the end of the month, we could talk to the Embassy on the new line, but the line was not yet hooked up to the receiver. The Guatemala end of the Tegucigalpa remote line, split off from the Managua-El Salvador circuit last month, performed flawlessly all month.

3. The continuing phone feeds from Central American contractors, handled via regular commercial lines, are now received in Main Radio and distributed on line to monitors, easing monitorial workloads.

4. The perils of secondary-source reporting were indicated when Caracas Radio Continente reported that 60 Vietnamese were occupying the U.S. consulate in Rio de Janeiro. After extensive checking Paraguay Bureau reported that the story was false and the State Department finally issued an authoritative statement that the report was erroneous.

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5. Other events during the month included:

- All-night operations to cover the 29 October hijacking of a Costa Rican airliner;
- A 24 October Castro speech, which led us to revise our procedures so that both Bureaus (Key West and Panama) are aware of the anticipated filing precedence earlier;
- The Cancun summit, where Mexican radio coverage was, as expected, very poor, and reporting was mostly from press;
- Vice President Bush's visit to Latin America, notable for the lack of reporting on violence.

6. The Bureau reinitiated subscriptions to Ecuadorean, Colombian and Venezuelan papers to provide backstop coverage until our expanding monitorial staff gains experience and capability. These publications will then be raised to primary coverage. This will provide faster exploitation of current intelligence. The Colombian papers, bought locally, are received with a 1-3 day lag.

7. Three G-2 personnel from the 193d Infantry Brigade visited the Bureau 7 October to brief monitors and editors on Spanish-language terminology used for military weapons and tactics being used in Central America. The 30-minute briefing was followed by a 30-minute question and answer period. The session was enthusiastically received by those attending and generally assessed as most useful.

B. Communications

1. The Bureau reacquired access to AUTOVON on 27 October. Access had been withdrawn in late 1980 due to lack of use and a heavy demand for lines by other users. It is expected that AUTOVON capability still will be used only infrequently, but it should provide some savings in telephone charges. The Bureau's AUTOVON number is (2)87-4001.

2. After several weeks spent trying to track down the precise configuration of the Bureau's listed communications altroute via NAVCOMSTA, Deputy Chief [redacted] discovered that in effect this altroute did not exist. Mike is ^{STAT} trying to work out a viable communications altroute with officers of the Panama Automated Relay and Tech Control. ✓

II. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

Two monitors entered on duty in the reporting period: [redacted] STAT on 6 October and [redacted] on 1 November. Their addition brings the Bureau's monitor staff to 19. A recruiting campaign is planned for November to find at least two additional monitor recruits to replace two retirements expected in the next few months.

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B. Buildings and Grounds

1. Work to refurbish most of the Bureau's antiquated metal furniture and filing cabinets was begun during the month. Renovation of the Bureau kitchen and dining area was also begun in October. Both projects are expected to be completed in 2 or 3 weeks.

2. Two officers of the Panama Canal Commission Fire Department visited the Bureau on 30 October to brief employees on the proper use of fire extinguishers and the Robert Shaw resuscitator. Future briefings will be scheduled on a semi-annual basis.

III. VISITS

To the Bureau: Capt Benjamin Vega Jr., Sp4 Carlos Cintron and Sp4 Ramon Rivera of G-2, 193d Infantry Brigade; Mr Don Ginder, Civilian Personnel Advisor, USSOUTHCOM.

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Chief, Panama Bureau, FBIS

Attachments:

Monthly Production Report
Operations Attachment
Engineering Attachment