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## THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

DDI-1578-82  
24 February 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM : National Intelligence Officer for Latin America

SUBJECT : Monthly Warning Assessment: Latin America

1. Central America -- The Next Dangerous Weeks\*

It is my personal view that the violence and political action planned by the extreme left in the next weeks could significantly shift the perceived balance of forces in El Salvador and Guatemala toward the extreme left. While not necessarily irreversible, this could mean that after the March 28 elections (whatever their outcome) -- though low turnout or a significant vote for the far right party would make matters worse -- there would be substantially greater international and domestic political pressures against any more military help for the Salvadoran government and for "negotiations" which could break the unity of the current civil-military coalition there.

Our information shows that the violence planned for El Salvador in March is intended to be dramatic and to simultaneously portray the guerrillas as strong and the government as too weak to win. The "annihilation strikes" planned for mid-March and the urban military attacks\*\* soon after could be and probably will be carried out (unless the government moves pre-emptively) with potentially "Tet-like" effects on perceptions. At the same time, additional terrorism in Guatemala before and after their March 7 presidential election is intended to be very dramatic. And we have highly

\*This section of the warning report reflects the objective but individual judgment of the NIO/LA. Although there is no dispute among my colleagues about the coming increase in guerrilla violence in El Salvador and Guatemala, only a minority might join me in depth of concern or the speculative comments on possible terrorist targets.

\*\*As an example, note the surprise attack on military facilities by 365 well-armed commandos in the capital of Uganda reported in the Washington Post, 24 February 1982.

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disturbing but still unconfirmed reports that the extreme left intends to use a foreign terrorist group (perhaps the Spanish Marxist/Leninist ETA separatists) for some type of dramatic commando action the region. A foreign intelligence service has confirmed that Spanish ETA terrorists have left France en route to Costa Rica with Nicaragua as the next stop, and that their operation might take place toward the end of this month or in early March. Though this is speculative on my part, possible targets could include the US Embassy in Nicaragua (with anti-NATO symbols complementing "anti-imperialist" ones), the US Embassy in Guatemala, Spanish diplomatic or business targets or some other high visibility group of individuals whose killing or capture would attract wide media interest.

Other potential targets for left terrorist attack in the next weeks might be one or more of the pro-constitutional, moderate and anti-Castro senior officers of the Honduras military and/or Honduran military equipment or facilities. Also, the social democratic and anti-communist President-elect of Costa Rica, his family or close associates might be another potential target for extreme left terrorists -- as a way of neutralizing and intimidating Costa Rica. My sense is that the extreme left intends to use these four to six weeks to bring about a surge of violence and propaganda which will make the defeat of the guerrillas seem hopeless or much too expensive while encouraging the mirage of negotiations as the "decent interval" and "way out" for the US.

## 2. El Salvador

Despite some reports of isolated military successes against the guerrilla forces, the army appears basically to be fighting a holding action and avoiding contact with the guerrillas. Arms are still flowing to the guerrillas, and they probably have what they need to sustain increased attacks. The guerrillas have laid ambitious plans to sabotage the elections, and even if they are only partly successful, military morale could be hurt severely and the momentum shift to the side of the guerrillas.

Thirteen mostly Latin American countries have indicated their intention to send observers to the 28 March election, but most Europeans have refrained. Recent political soundings in El Salvador suggest that support for the right is mounting and that the Duarte government -- which has been plagued increasingly by internal squabbling, graft, and finger-pointing -- may be replaced by a conservative alliance. Under a new conservative government, repression would be increased, agrarian reform curtailed, and US leverage could be seriously diminished.

## 3. Guatemala

The guerrillas appear to be making some progress toward increasing tactical military cooperation following their unity announcement earlier this month. Analysts do not anticipate a major military offensive against the army per se prior to the 7 March elections, but do expect increased terrorist acts and further efforts to wear the military down and stretch out its forces.

Reporting also suggests that a large foreign terrorist action is being planned in Central America in the next few weeks. The operation could be related to guerrilla plans to disrupt elections in Guatemala or El Salvador; US facilities and individuals would be prime targets.

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#### 4. Nicaragua

The Nicaraguan military buildup continues. A new airborne unit has been established at Montelimar, and six AN-2 small transport aircraft were recently acquired. Managua reportedly is planning to acquire two to four Boeing 707-class transport and passenger planes, more helicopters and two to four short takeoff and landing aircraft. Such acquisitions will significantly increase Managua's ability to airlift military personnel and equipment.

Guerrilla exfiltration from Nicaragua had tapered off over the past few months, but recent reports suggests that it now may be picking up. Several unconfirmed reports suggest that large numbers of guerrillas are receiving training at several camps in northwestern Nicaragua and possibly Costa Rica. Further collection and analysis will be necessary before a meaningful estimate can be made of how many guerrillas are being trained, the extent of Cuban or other external involvement, when they might be exfiltrated, and into which countries. Analysts are especially concerned, however, that the introduction of a large body of newly trained guerrillas into El Salvador could deal a major, if not catastrophic, blow to the government.

We continue to receive reports of increased violence along Nicaragua's border with Honduras. Nicaraguan forces are creating a well-fortified "cordon sanitaire", possibly 100 kilometers wide. At least eight villages -- and possibly 20 to 30 -- have been burned to the ground, and the government has admitted to relocating 8,500 Miskito Indians away from the border. Such relocation efforts are likely to continue, depopulating large portions of northeastern Nicaragua. At the same time, the Sandinistas are likely to launch a more vigorous anti-insurgent campaign and increase their support to terrorists operating inside Honduras.

#### 5. Costa Rica

Last month's election was a setback for the Communists. Although they won four seats in the Assembly (up from three), the party polled fewer votes in an election where 100,000 more people voted. This loss of support is likely to strengthen the position of hardliners who want to foment unrest. Meanwhile, after the new government takes office in May, it can be expected to downgrade its relations with Nicaragua and to reduce the Soviet presence in San Jose. President-elect Monge recognizes Costa Rica's economic situation and appears committed to implementing IMF-mandated austerity measures. Nevertheless, such action will lose him some popular support as well as some support within his own party.

#### 6. Cuba

Soviet arms deliveries to Cuba continue at a high rate, with some 4,000 tons received in January. Assembly has begun on one of about 12 HI-24 (HIND) helicopters that were delivered last month. One additional MIG-23 fuselage crate has been observed raising the total known deliveries this year to nine. Since last fall, the number of OSA naval patrol crafts also has risen from 7 to 13. There is no evidence as yet that any of this equipment

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is earmarked for Nicaragua or that preparations are under way in Cuba to transfer it to Nicaragua. Most analysts believe that Cuba would transfer such sophisticated equipment to Nicaragua only if the Managua regime was seriously threatened and Cuban forces were deployed as well. Under such conditions, Havana probably could dispatch 20 or 30 MIG fighters without seriously impending effectiveness of its own forces. Any helicopters would have to be shipped to Nicaragua; they cannot be flown. Moreover, Cuban pilots probably need several more months training in the MI-24 helicopters before they reach proficiency. The Cubans would be more likely to send naval patrol boats to Nicaragua. Nicaragua needs more patrol boats, and Nicaraguans receiving patrol boat training in Cuba should be returning to Nicaragua next month.

Initial analysis of recent Soviet brigade exercise activity suggests some trends that could be troubling: the activity began a couple of weeks early, involved more locations (three) and extended for a longer period of time. Moreover, Cuban bivouacs were observed close to two of the training areas.

Cuban plans to counter Radio Marti with their own broadcast/jamming network also were noted as likely to create serious problems for the US.

#### 7. Suriname

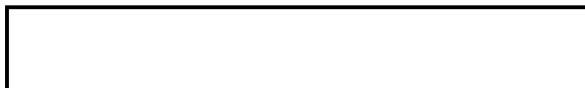
The ouster of President Chin A Sen in Suriname has removed a very important moderating influence from the leadership. Although some forces for moderation remain, the events of the past few weeks have opened the door to a more rapid (and possible irreversible) radicalization of the ruling clique. The new government will certainly be more leftist in its orientation, and we expect that much greater emphasis will be placed on indoctrinating the people in radical left principles. Cuban influence is likely to grow, and there is some real potential that Suriname will become another Cuban partner like Grenada. However, some pro-Cuban leaders there may be wary of becoming too dependent on the Cubans, and the country has more resources and a significantly higher standard of living than Grenada.

#### 8. Counting Procedures

Beginning this month, two tables will be attached to every warning report summarizing guerrilla and government security force levels in selected Central American countries. The numbers reflect coordinated intelligence community estimates and will be revised at each monthly warning meeting.

*Constantine Menges*  
Constantine C. Menges

Atts: (2)



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CENTRAL AMERICA: GUERRILLA FORCES, 1982

Country	Category	February	March	April	May	June	Confidence Level*	Classification	Unclassified Number	
Nicaragua**	Full-time guerrillas	less than 1,000					D	25X1	less than 1,000	
	Militia/part-time guerrillas									
El Salvador	Full-time guerrillas	4,500-5,000					D			5,000
	Militia/part-time guerrillas	5,000-10,000					D			5,000-10,000
Guatemala	Full-time guerrillas	4,000-5,000					D		4,500	
	Militia/part-time guerrillas									
Honduras	Full-time guerrillas	100					C		some	
	Militia/part-time guerrillas									

\* The confidence level ranges from A (highest level of confidence) to D (lowest level of confidence) as follows:

- A = Uncertainty is less than 20 percent.
- B = Uncertainty is less than 35 percent.
- C = Uncertainty is less than 50 percent.
- D = Uncertainty is greater than 50 percent.

\*\* Anti-Sandinista forces operating mostly from Honduras.

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