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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

NFAC-0966-79

26 February 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : Director, National Foreign Assessment Center
National Intelligence Officer for Warning *RL*

FROM : Acting National Intelligence Officer for Latin America

SUBJECT : Monthly Warning Assessment: Latin America

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1. Action Requested: None; for your information only.

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2. New Developments: Terrorism in Central America continues to escalate and in some countries threatens the lives of US Embassy personnel and their families. Terrorist activities have provoked harsh repression in Nicaragua, "death squad" retribution in Guatemala, and a right-wing warning to President Romero in El Salvador to bring subversion under control or be ousted and replaced by a military junta.

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El Salvador

3. President Romero reportedly has been given until Holy Week (mid-April) to bring terrorism and leftist subversion under control. If he does not succeed, a group of military officers and influential civilians intend to remove Romero, form a military junta and crack down hard on leftist terrorism. Meanwhile, intelligence has revealed that the Farabundo Marti Popular Liberation Forces (FPL) is planning a new wave of violence against the Romero government and acts of terrorism against a list of US Embassy officials.

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4. While FPL action could begin any time, it probably will begin after March 1979 when a cadre of some 50 members, who are currently receiving military and ideological training in Cuba, will return to El Salvador. They are supposed to be the organizational core of a force of two thousand men. Reportedly, this force is currently being trained in small "popular militia" units.

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5. The FPL is the strongest terrorist organization in El Salvador and has effectively carried out numerous assassinations and kidnappings. Leftist in orientation, it has about 600 members. It is associated with a mass organization known as the Popular Revolutionary Bloc, which numbers about 60,000 members and carries out political action in the form of demonstrations and work stoppages.

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6. US officials and their families number more than one hundred people in El Salvador. In addition, there are 150 Peace Corps volunteers scattered across the country. According to the Embassy Security Officer, adequate protection for all Americans is impossible in the face of this threat. The Ambassador is considering various security measures including the possibility of a staff reduction on the order of 35-40 percent to be carried out slowly to reduce unfavorable political impact.

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Nicaragua

7. Following the breakdown of US-led mediation efforts, President Somoza is pressing his advantage to eliminate his political opposition. In January alone, the National Guard killed or captured 95 members of the FSLN.

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8. In mid-February, the National Guard shot and killed five youths inside a church where they had staged a sit-in to support a hospital workers' strike. Outraged, the Curia of Leon condemned the "brutal massacre" in a telegram to Somoza. A number of groups have issued strong condemnations of the National Guard. The mayor of Leon has reportedly resigned, and the United People's Movement, a coalition of some 20 leftists organizations, called on the church to excommunicate Somoza.

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9. Reaction to the "massacre" has been intense, and we should anticipate that more incidents directed against the National Guard, Somoza, and the government will occur in Leon and will spread to other cities of Nicaragua. Although many of these confrontations are likely to be ugly, Somoza will doubtless maintain his control over the country.

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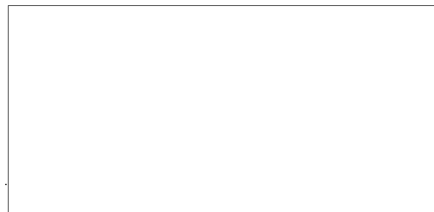
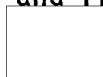
Guatemala

10. In Guatemala there has been an alarming increase in the number of killings -- many related to land encroachments in the rural areas. Most of the victims were leftists. The Acting President of Guatemala, Villagran Kramer, has attributed the killings to "death squads", giving rise to the interpretation that the government security forces were carrying them out because of their frustration with the legal system which they believe puts criminals back on the streets.

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11. Villagran Kramer's surprising remarks will doubtless lead to tension between him and President Lucas when the latter returns from the United States.



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