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ENDERS

Draft Talking Points: U.S. Strategy

1. There are three requirements for an effective strategy:

- must deal with the situation on the ground in El Salvador, with Nicaragua as a platform for destabilizing the area, and with Cuba as the source of the trouble;
- must maintain majority support in the U.S. public and Congress;
- must mobilize as much support in the region as possible.

The three are interrelated: the more company we have in the region, the more support we'll get at home. The more effective our action is on the ground, the more likely Congress and the public will be to suspend judgment.

2. In U.S. public and Congressional opinion there is a broad but still unmobilized majority that doesn't

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want to see the communists win in Central America, an overlapping (and aroused) majority that recoils against the violence, and a hostile minority composed of the old Vietnam network plus many church groups.

3. In the region there are many countries -- with Venezuela and Colombia the most important -- that fear a communist victory and want to act to prevent it. Little by little they are coming out in the open. But they are still not sure the U.S. has the will and staying power to win Mexico which talks left abroad and rules right at home, is unlikely to change course, although de la Madrid will probably take fewer foreign initiatives than Lopez Portillo. The gathering economic crisis will inhibit Mexican activism.

4. The strategy that has emerged from many NSC discussions and the two NSDD's responds to these requirements. It has six elements.

-- First, we have to hold on the ground in El Salvador. That means training and equipping a substantially larger army that will gain the military advantage. But it also means increased economic aid. The

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insurgents' attack against the economy will discredit the government unless we offset the costs.

- Second, we have to press on with the reforms in El Salvador -- elections, land reform, human rights. This is the way ultimately to defeat the insurgents (they marginalize themselves by not participating in the process). It also is the only way to maintain U.S. Congressional and public support or tolerance.

- Third, we must take the war to Nicaragua. They are vulnerable, as the Miskito Indian and various high level defections indicate. We doubt we can overthrow the government. But we can disrupt support to El Salvador, and up the cost to the Cubans and Soviets.

- (Fourth, we must isolate Nicaragua, preparing a coalition of countries to support us and possibly act with us should the Soviets and Cubans move fast to arm Nicaragua. That is the purpose of the CADC, including Nicaragua's neighbors, with support from Venezuela, Colombia and us. It

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is now a political and economic grouping. More heavy arms flowing into Nicaragua would transform it into a military grouping.

-- Fifth, we must lay the basis for future prosperity in the area through the CBI. The program, which is an innovative blend of government action and private enterprise, is intended to preempt new insurrections in the area, broaden support at home, and provide a vehicle for cooperation (if not cooptation) of such regional powers as Canada, Mexico, Venezuela. Colombia may now join. .

-- Sixth, we must build pressure on Cuba. Radio Marti (which at last is moving), preparation to defend against a new Mariel, tightening the embargo, squeezing Cuban staffs at the UN and in Washington, and the use of military exercises and simulations are all elements here.

5. That is where we are at the moment. Two remarks.

-- First, this is still, most of us who have been working on it believe, an incomplete strategy.

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We have yet to find the way to deal effectively with Cuba. You authorized contingency planning for petroleum quarantine/embargo/air strikes against Cuba, along with similar actions against Nicaragua. The planning has been done. But central questions remain: could the U.S. stand up to a long crisis? Could Castro claim victory merely by surviving? Could the tentacles (Cuban activities in Africa and Central America) survive even if the head were struck? What we need is the right political concept. If Poland were invaded we could "take Cuba hostage" (for example by a petroleum quarantine) and hold it at low levels of economic performance for as long as the Soviets stayed in Poland. The U.S. public would probably support us in that case. We are looking for other concepts. Once we find a way to bring a credible threat against Cuba -- one we would be prepared to carry out -- we can construct a bargaining scenario that offers Castro an alternative.

-- Second, this is an interrelated strategy. It won't do us much good to squeeze Nicaragua or

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hassle Cuba if we lose on the ground in El Salvador. But in order to hold there, we need emergency economic as well as military assistance. The economic aid is part of the CBI, still to be announced. To those such as myself who have been spending a lot of time on the Hill lately, it will not be possible to get Congressional consent to the CBI in this year of recession, budget cutting and elections, unless we make the strategic argument vigorously and at very high level.

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