

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL -?
on Caribbean Basin
19 February 1982

For a nation of 10 million people, Cuba has displayed a remarkable reach on a worldwide scale. It has 70,000 military and civilian advisors abroad in almost 30 countries. Of these, more than half are military. Over 40,000 are in Africa, and some 7,000 in the Middle East. There are 12,000 Cuban technical trainees working in Czechoslovakia and East Germany, and 5-6,000 studying in the Soviet Union.

How did this phenomenon develop? Part of it springs from the demographics--the same source--a combination of overpopulation and youth unemployment--which produced the Mariel boat lift. Since 1980, there has been a surge in the 15-19 year old age group of 50 percent. Castro has admitted that tens of thousands of youths are out of work. Recently, he said in a speech that he would like to send 10,000 Cuban youths to Siberia to cut timber for Cuban construction projects. They have lots of young men to train and send into other countries--and that's the way to get preferment in government employment in Castro's Cuba.

The other source of Cuba's aggression is Soviet influence and support. The Soviets sell their weapons. Arms sales earn about 20 percent of their hard currency. Last year they gave a billion dollars worth of weapons to Cuba--66,000 tons of equipment, compared with the previous ten-year annual average of 15,000 tons. The new stuff includes 34 MIG-21s and -23s, SA-6s, T-62 tanks, MI-24 helicopters, mine sweepers, and guided-missile attack boats.

Today Cuba sits astride the Caribbean with a modernized army of 150,000 troops, reserves of 100,000 and 200 Soviet MIGs.

In addition to free military equipment, the Soviet Union gives Cuba \$8 million a day, or \$3 billion a year, to keep its economy going. The Russians buy sugar at a premium and sell oil at a discount. There is no way that Cuba could play the role it does in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East without this cash and military support from the Soviet Union.

There is every indication that Nicaragua is being built up to a superpower on a Central American scale. With a population of about 2 1/2 million, its army and militia is twice as large as that of El Salvador, a country with twice its population. Soviet tanks and the expected arrival of MIG aircraft will give Nicaragua military domination over neighboring Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Costa Rica with a combined population seven times theirs. With the help of 1,800 Cuban military and security advisors, 50 Soviets, smaller numbers of East Germans and Bulgarians, Vietnamese, North Koreans, and radical Arabs gathered in Managua, the insurgency in El Salvador is being directed, trained and supplied. Under Cuban and East German guidance, the Sandinista junta is imposing a totalitarian control with a block system of population control on the Cuban model, repression of newspapers, opposition politicians, labor unions, and other private sector leaders.

The conflict in El Salvador pits 5,000 full-time guerrillas and 5,000 support militia against a government army of 16,000 and a national guard, border guards and police aggregating about 9,000 men.

The insurgents are being supplied with arms by air, by sea and by land through Honduras from Nicaragua. They are being directed from Managua by Cubans and Nicaraguans experienced in waging guerrilla war with a sophisticated communications net located in Nicaragua. The conflict has been stalemated for

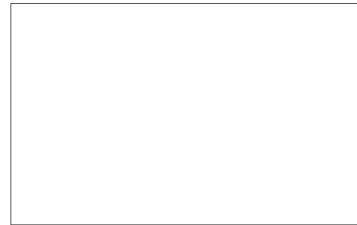
over a year. Government forces can make large sweeps, and after they return to their bases the guerrillas regain control of many roads, villages and large segments of the countryside. They are now attacking provincial towns and economic targets to intimidate voters from going to the polls in the March election and to depress the economy. As long as the insurgents are able to attack economic targets, any possible level of economic assistance will not keep up with the economic loss the insurgents can inflict. In an insurgency conflict, unless the government wins it ultimately loses, and that is the prospect for El Salvador as long as the insurgency can be supplied and trained from outside the country.

The insurgency has spread to Guatemala where during this year the number of insurgents more than doubled to 4,500 and trained leaders and arms came in from Cuba and Nicaragua. The Guatemalan government is under heavy pressure and if El Salvador falls there is little chance that Guatemala can survive.

There is a growing concern about all this on the part of other Latin American countries. Fifteen of them spoke out against the declaration of support for the El Salvador insurgency promulgated by Mexico and France. OAS, by a vote of 22 to 3, supported the elections in El Salvador with only Nicaragua, Mexico and Grenada voting against. This last month Costa Rica, Honduras and El Salvador joined in requesting protection from the United States, Venezuela and Colombia against the threat they perceived in the growing militarization of Nicaragua.

MEMORANDUM FOR: DCI

A copy of your revised
10 Feb NSC notes, in
case you plan to use them
tomorrow.



Date 18 Feb 82

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