

72-2544/1

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Attached for your review and use is the briefing on Nicaraguan activities. The sections on the Nicaraguan military build-up and the destruction of the Indian villages have been coordinated with DIA and [redacted]

We are still working with the section on Nicaraguan export of subversion.

I have included some page-size graphics as examples to show some of the boards which [redacted] will use in the briefing.

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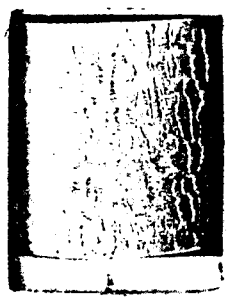
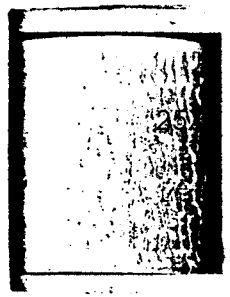


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Attachment:
As stated

Date 3 March 1982

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NICARAGUAN MILITARY BUILDUP

Prior to the overthrow of Somoza by the Sandinistas, he maintained a National Guard of around 10,000 men. This force was widely dispersed throughout the country in an internal security role. The National Guard had little heavy equipment, as there was little perceived external threat.

When the Sandinistas came to power, they immediately began organizing a regular military force and a police force. The Sandinista Police, similar to Somoza's National Guard, was gradually built up to 5,000 to 6,000 men.

We have seen the regular military grow from a small force of 5,000 to a large standing army supplemented by an even larger militia and reserve. It is now the largest military in Central America. This combined force, which totals about 70,000 men, has upset the military balance in Central America and alarmed Nicaragua's neighbors. This is especially true since Costa Rica maintains no standing army. By way of contrast, Guatemala with a population of 7.2 million and a growing insurgency has an armed force of 15-17,000 with a reserve of some 35,000 comprised of reserves in varying state of readiness, national police, treasury police, etc. Honduras with 3.8 million population has some 12,500 under arms with a police force of 5,000, .5 percent of the population and El Salvador with almost 5 million--and fighting an active insurgency--has a security establishment of some 24,000, .5 percent of population. The Nicaraguan military is 3 percent of the total population.

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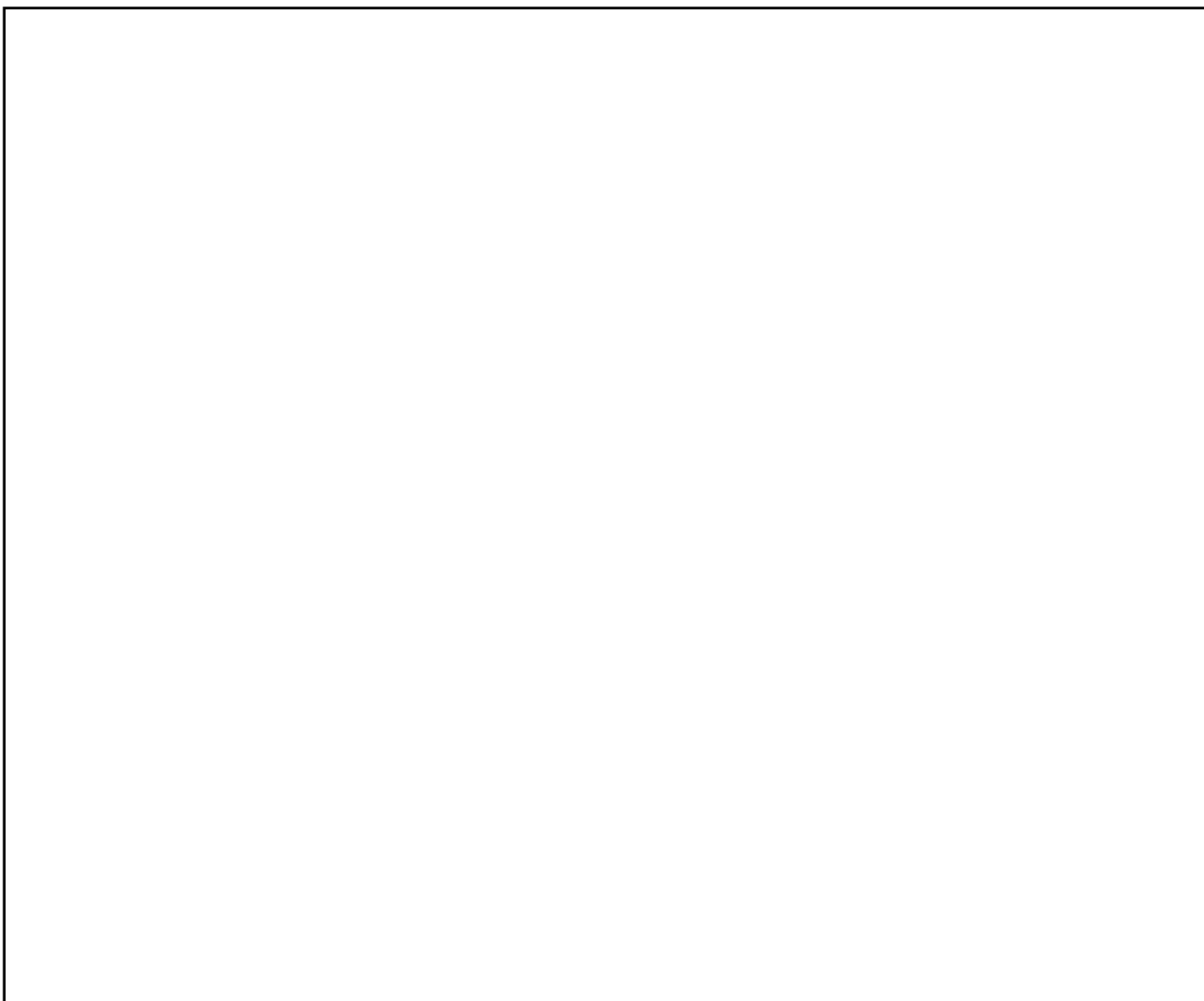
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To illustrate Nicaragua's force growth, this map (map 1) shows some of the major military bases the Sandinistas have constructed since coming to power. They have divided the country into seven military regions, and each contains at least one major infantry garrison.

Since coming to power the Sandinistas have built some 30 new installations.

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[REDACTED]

We know that Nicaragua has received at least two dozen T-54/T-55 tanks as well as 12 152-mm howitzers, and 12 APCs. These give it a distinct firepower advantage over its neighbors. (Honduras has only 16 Scorpion tanks, and no APCs.

In addition to this infantry buildup, we know that Nicaragua has pilots training on MIG fighter aircraft in Cuba and Bulgaria. Four airfields in Nicaragua are being improved to handle these aircraft.

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[REDACTED]

Once Nicaragua begins to receive MIG fighter aircraft sometime this year and after the pilot training and airfield expansions are completed, it will

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have the best air force in Central America. (Honduras has only 15 vintage Super Mysteres bought from Israel and a small number of unflyable F-86s.)

The Cuban influence in the Nicaragua military has been pervasive. We estimate the Cubans have some 2,000 military and security advisers in Nicaragua. These include advisers from the general staff level down to individual companies. Last Fall, the Cubans sent a contingent of elite counterinsurgency advisers to Nicaragua from their Ministry of Interior, including several senior officers. The total Cuban contingent in Nicaragua is approximately 6,000. They are employed in a variety of areas: 500 medical; 2,000 in teaching; 300-600 in government agencies, 750 in construction/fishing, in addition to the 2,000 military/security advisers.

While the Soviet military presence is not nearly as large, perhaps 50 personnel, they have various officers advising the Nicaraguan General Staff, and they have helped in the preparation of military plans. The visit in November of Sandinista Defense Minister Humberto Ortega to Moscow clearly portends a more extensive Soviet involvement in Nicaragua in the near future.

In summary, we view the continued expansion of the Nicaraguan armed forces and the continued receipt of Soviet-style weaponry with concern. While for the present, the Nicaraguan buildup can be considered in large part defensive, these trends provide Managua with an obvious offensive capability which has alarmed its neighbors and upset the traditional military balance in Central America.

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Destruction of Indian Villages

Another development of concern is the recent Sandinista repression of the Indians in the northeastern part of the country especially along the Rio Coco, the natural boundary between Honduras and Nicaragua. (See Map 2.)

Since early January, the Nicaraguan government has forcibly relocated entire Indian communities, totalling some 10,000 people, away from the

25X1 Honduran border area. [REDACTED]

25X1 Reports from refugees, Church officials, and other sources indicated that most of the vacated villages were burned to the ground. [REDACTED]

25X1 The area of destruction appears widespread near the Honduran border. [REDACTED]

The Sandinistas probably are attempting to create a cordon-sanitaire that will facilitate counterinsurgency operations along the border and deny the

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insurgents--many of whom are Indians--any support from Indian communities in the area.

Nicaraguan Export of Subversion

Another tactic of Sandinista military strategy is to support so-called wars of national liberation in Central America. The Sandinistas have provided military advice and assistance to Marxist insurgents in Guatemala and El Salvador and to leftist terrorists in Honduras. Ample evidence, much of which is available in the White Paper, demonstrates that Nicaragua, Cuba, Soviet Bloc countries, and other radical governments began providing large quantities of mostly Western-manufactured arms to the Salvadoran insurgents after the fall of Somoza in mid-1979. In the spring of 1980, the Soviets told some East European countries to begin sending arms to the Salvadoran guerrillas. Some of these arms were aboard the Panamanian aircraft that crashed near San Miguel, El Salvador, on 15 June 1980.

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Arms that are known to have reached the Salvadoran guerrillas via Nicaragua include Western-made semi-automatic and automatic assault rifles such as the US M-16, Israeli Galil, West German G-3, and the Belgian FAL. Heavy machine guns, mortars, recoilless rifles, and rocket-propelled anti-tank weapons also are part of a large and diverse arsenal that has been sent from Nicaragua by land, air, and sea to El Salvador since mid-1980. Nicaragua has

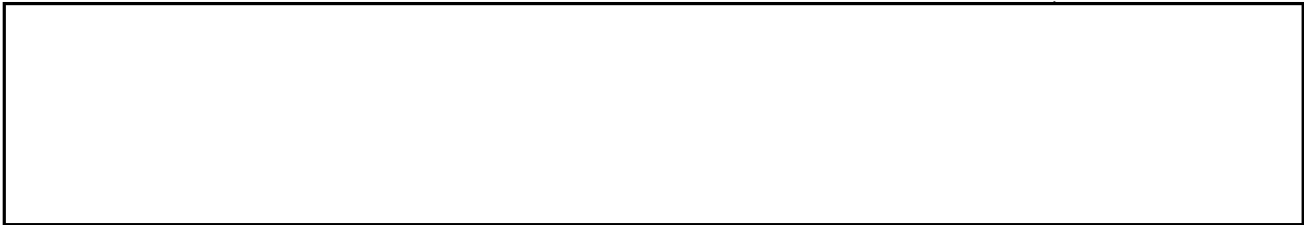
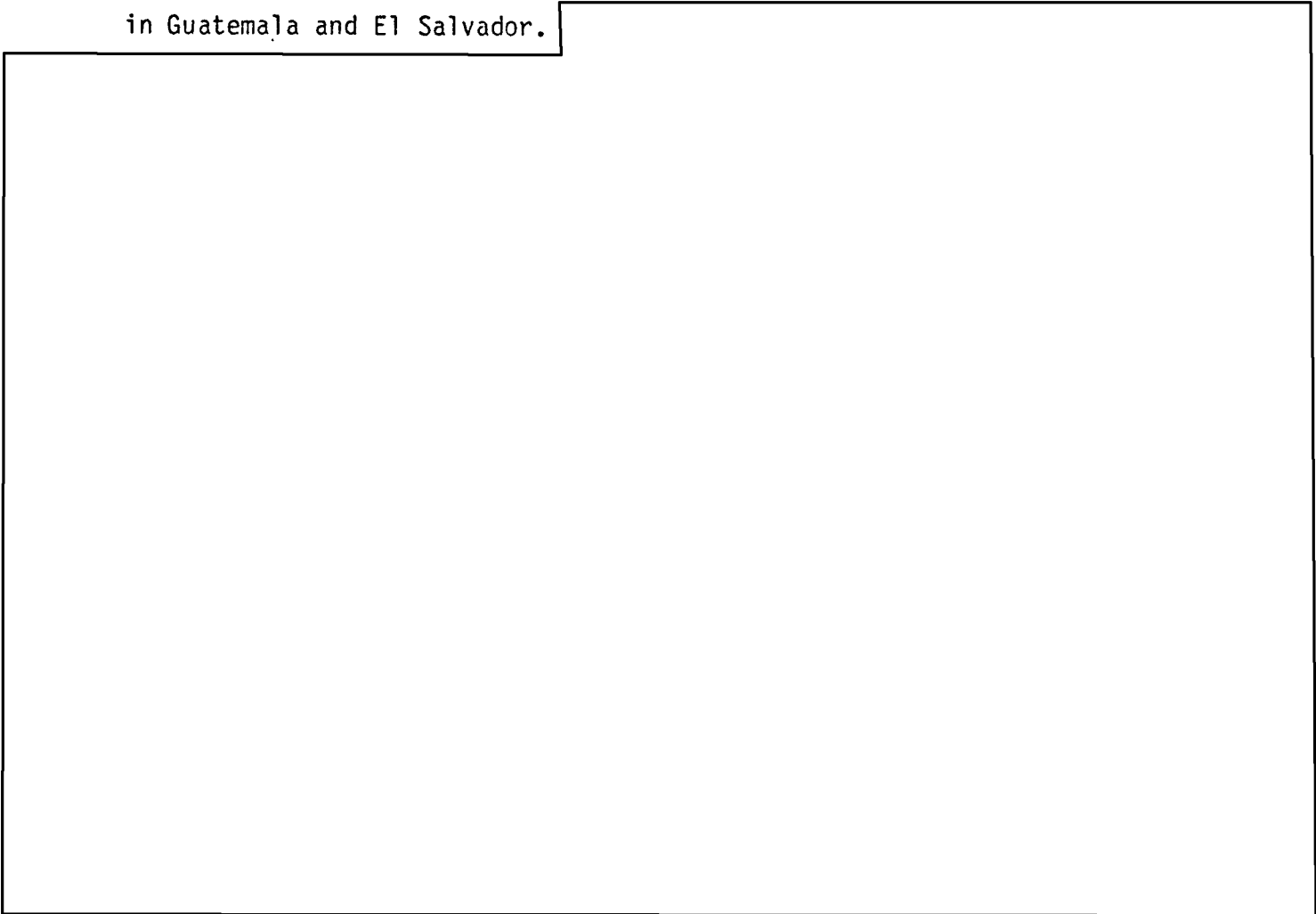
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used Costa Rica as a transit point for weapons shipments to El Salvador and has established guerrilla training camps in northern Costa Rica in order to conceal its own involvement.

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We can document that arms continue to flow through Honduras to guerrillas in Guatemala and El Salvador.




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The Sandinistas also have trained Salvadoran guerrillas in the military tactics, weapons, communications, and explosives at temporary training schools scattered around the country and on Sandinista military bases. Managua's assistance has been important for the increase in tactical sophistication of the guerrillas in El Salvador. The provision of false documents and training to Salvadorans has been verified by two Salvadoran terrorists who were captured by Costa Rican authorities when they attempted to kidnap a Salvadoran businessman on 29 January 1982 near San Jose. The businessman was wounded, but escaped. Three other terrorists were killed. In a recently released confession, the captured terrorists said that the Nicaraguan government gave them false passports and identification cards for travel to Costa Rica and that they had received political and military training in Nicaragua from Sandinista officials.

In sum, we have incontrovertible evidence that arms are continuing to flow from Nicaragua to insurgents in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and that both the Cuban and the Nicaraguan governments have been providing military and terrorist training to guerrillas from these countries. At present, Nicaraguan and Cuban efforts to export subversion appear to be targetted primarily on El Salvador, but the information presented here today shows that the insurgent threat to other Central American countries such as Guatemala and Honduras is just as much a cause for concern.