

7 December 1982

TO: DCI —
FROM: NIO/LA
RE: Talking points for the NFIB 8 Dec 1982 meeting on
SNIE: Prospects for Escalating Hostilities Between
Nicaragua and Honduras (83.2-82)

Scope of the Special Estimate

This estimate examines the prospects for hostilities on the Nicaragua-Honduras border over the next three to six months. It briefly describes the background to the current situation; summarizes the military assets in Honduras and Nicaragua, and those in Cuba that might intervene in Nicaragua; and estimates the likelihood of different types of major hostilities.

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Reason for the Special Estimate

This Special Estimate was prompted by a number of recent events and intelligence reports suggesting that the level of hostilities could increase sharply. These include:

- The increased activity in 1982 of the anti-Sandinista insurgency and the recent movement of almost all anti-Sandinista guerrillas from Honduras into camps located in Nicaragua.
- The arrival in Nicaragua of about 25 armored vehicles on a Soviet Bloc ship in November 1982.
- An intelligence report, not confirmed, that MIG jet fighters are available in Cuba for movement into Nicaragua and that a number of trained Nicaraguan pilots are also in Cuba.

Key judgments reached

In the next three to six months:

- The anti-Sandinista insurgency inside Nicaragua will probably grow and military activity will increase;

- There is a high probability that Nicaragua will respond by stepping up its support for subversion against Honduras;
- There is a 30% to 50% probability that Nicaragua will increase the number and intensity of its military attacks into Honduras;
- Cuba would probably send combat troops if the Sandinista regime were threatened provided that the Soviet Union did not use its leverage to veto this and if the US did not appear ready to take direct military action to interdict or defeat the Cubans in Nicaragua.

Areas of current controversy within the intelligence Community

There is a difference of viewpoint between CIA/DDO and several other intelligence components (DIA, DDI, INR) concerning the current size of the anti-Sandinista forces: DDO sets the number at about 3,500 whereas the other agencies want more evidence before moving beyond their estimate of about 2,500.

cc: DDCI
DDI
C/NIC
D/ALA

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