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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

23 May 1980

MEMORANDUM

CUBA-NICARAGUA: SUPPORT FOR CENTRAL AMERICAN INSURGENCIES

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Summary

Apparently preoccupied with their own domestic affairs during the past month, neither Havana nor Managua has undertaken any major new initiatives in support of Central America's revolutionary movements.

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Of note was the attendance--
--of an FSLN delegation at the 19-20 April meeting in Mexico of the Communist parties of Central America, Mexico, and Panama. The Sandinista delegation acknowledged the FSLN's adherence to the international Communist movement and also pledged "all out support" to Salvadoran revolutionary forces "at the appropriate time."

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El Salvador

In a mid-April conversation with the US Ambassador, Nicaraguan Interior Minister Tomas Borge reiterated Sandinista

This memorandum was requested by the National Security Adviser to the President. It responds to specific questions and is not intended to be an analysis of the overall relationship between Cuba-Nicaragua and Central America. It was prepared by the Latin America Division of the Office of Political Analysis under the direction of the National Intelligence Officer for Latin America, and coordinated with the Clandestine Services and the Office of Strategic Research. Information in this memorandum reflects information available through 15 May 1980.

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sympathy for the left in El Salvador but added that the FSLN would not allow its territory to be used to destabilize the Salvadoran junta. To substantiate this familiar line, Borge claimed that Nicaraguan authorities recently had intercepted a boat carrying arms to El Salvador. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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statements of the FSLN delegation at the 19-20 April meeting in Mexico indicate increasing FSLN involvement with the Communist left and a close identification with Cuba. This preparatory session for a formal conference next fall was devoted largely to country-by-country status reports, with an emphasis on expressions of support for the revolutionary forces in El Salvador. [redacted]

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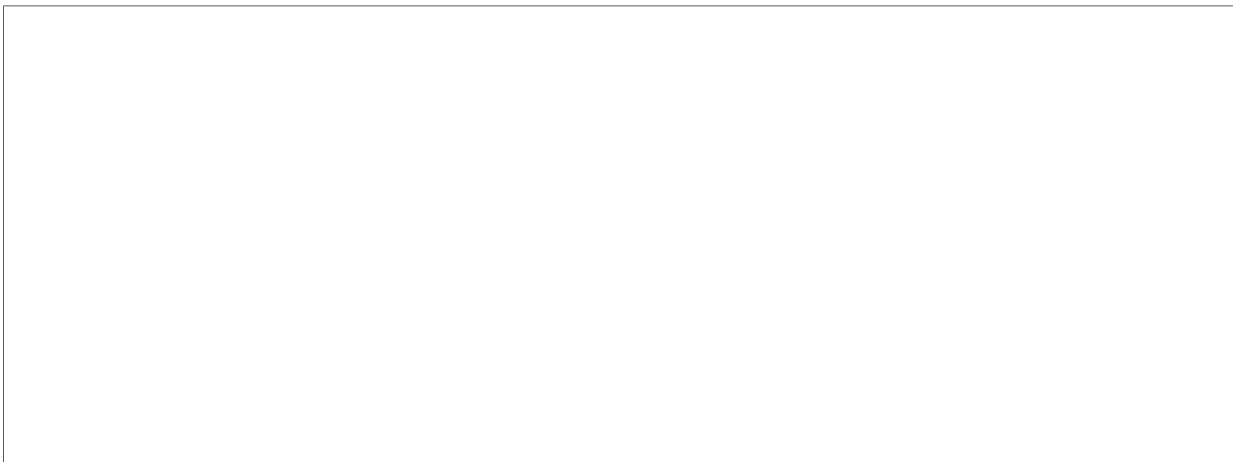
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[redacted]

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Another suggestion of low-level FSLN involvement occurred in mid-April, when five alleged Sandinista militants were captured in San Jose, Costa Rica, while attempting to recruit university students to join the Salvadoran insurgents. According to a public statement by Costa Rican authorities, the militants had infiltrated from Nicaragua with letters of introduction and other documents from various Nicaraguan revolutionary movements, most of which we had not heard of previously. The group probably was acting largely on its own, but at least some higher level Sandinistas apparently were aware of the effort. According to the Costa Rican statement, the captured recruiters claimed under interrogation that Julio Ramos, Popular Sandinista Army (EPS) chief of military security and intelligence, had refused them assistance "because of the international problems this would cause for Nicaragua in the event of discovery."

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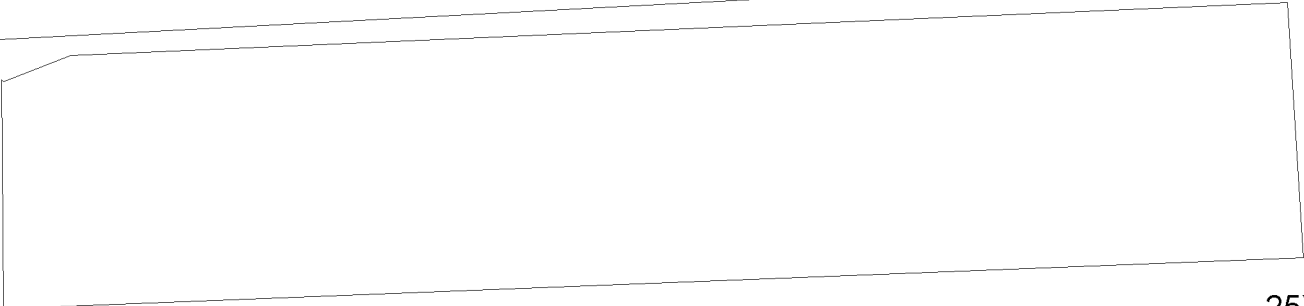
Cuban and Other Communist Involvement

In his lengthy speech on 1 May, Fidel Castro noted that "the Salvadoran situation . . . demands the most ample support to halt . . . the imperialists." This theme was reflected by Havana's international news service, which pointed out that "the popular revolutionary struggle" was intensifying in El Salvador, and that "international support for that combative nation is also rising."

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Honduras

In a move that may signal a marked increase in Communist militancy, a leader of the Communist Party of Honduras (PCH) who advocates a harder revolutionary line is reported to have resigned from the party in mid April or early May.

[redacted] this may well precipitate numerous defections to the militant, action-oriented Special Apparat, a Cuban-supported faction that emerged in the PCH in 1978. [redacted]

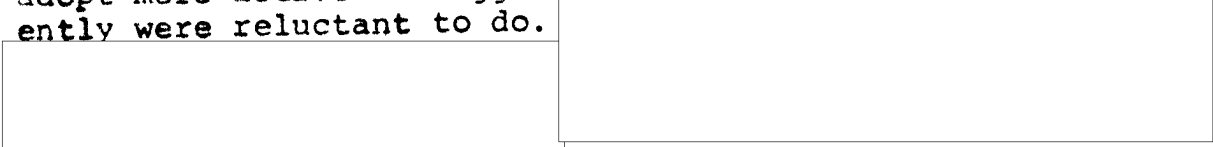
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[redacted] members of the America Department of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) had urged the moderate leadership of the PCH to

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adopt more active and aggressive tactics, which they apparently were reluctant to do.



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I. Cuban Training of Central American Insurgents

El Salvador

We believe that as many as 500 Salvadoran leftists have received training in guerrilla warfare and related subjects in Cuba since late 1978. The training, which remained relatively modest in 1979, appears to have increased markedly this year. [redacted]

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By mid-1979 more than 100 members of the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL)--the largest and most active revolutionary terrorist group--had completed a four-month course in Cuba and returned to El Salvador to serve as instructors for a planned force of 2,000 guerrillas. [redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

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Honduras

The Cubans also have trained members of the Honduran Communist Party (PCH), in part to support Salvadoran leftists. They appear to have instructed greater numbers since the PCH initiated its support of Nicaraguan revolutionaries in 1978. [redacted]

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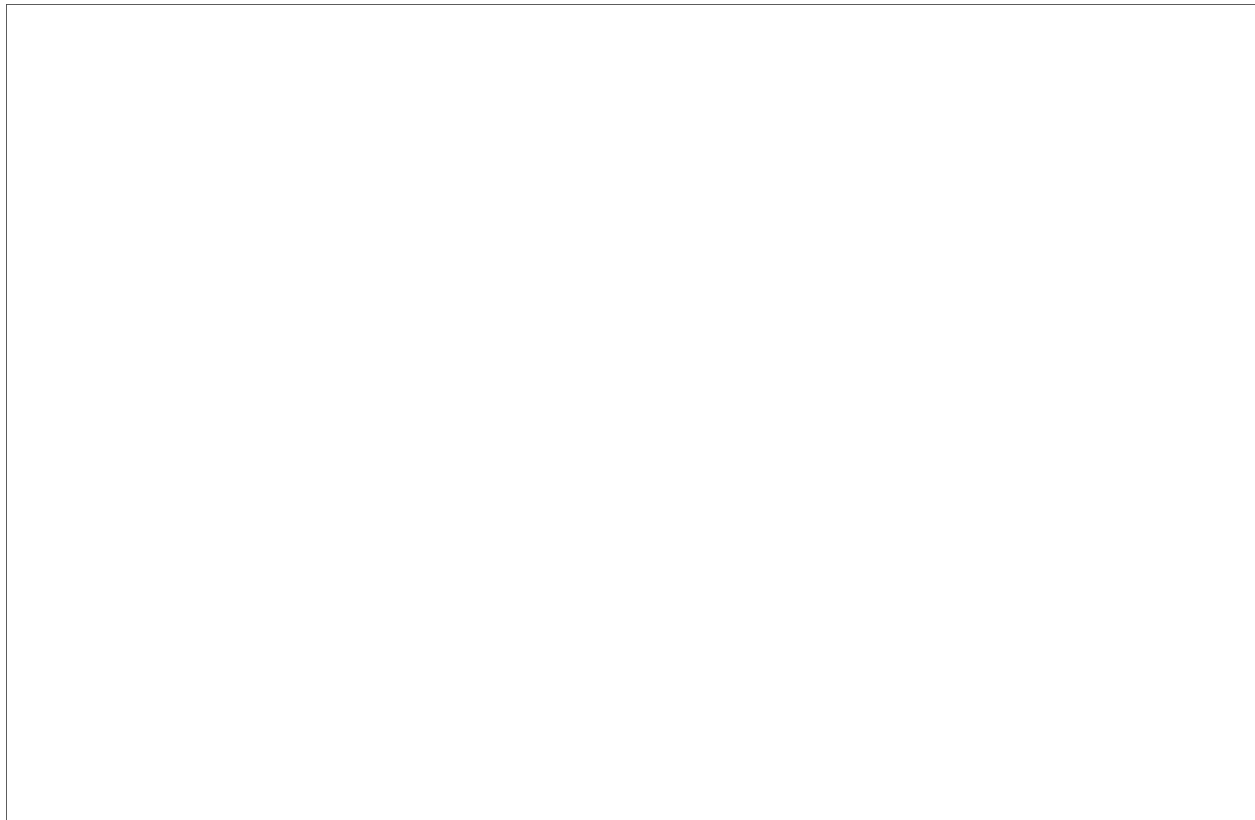
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Third Country Involvement

To supplement its own efforts, Cuba is encouraging
third-country involvement.

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II. Support for the Right

A comparison of Cuban assistance to the left with external support of the extreme right is difficult, particularly in view of the Castro regime's non-material aid--such as tactical guidance, brokering of contacts with leftist groups elsewhere, and Havana's efforts to unify leftist groups. Our knowledge of rightwing groups is sketchy. We believe there is less foreign involvement in rightist terrorism, partly because the large sums of money available from domestic rightwing groups and individuals for the purchase of materiel and trained assassins makes external aid less necessary. Similarly, armed forces personnel active in counterterror have little need for external assistance. [redacted]

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Support for the Salvadoran right is strongest in Guatemala. [redacted]

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[redacted] Several months ago, the leader of Guatemala's archconservative National Liberation Movement told the US Ambassador that should civil war break out in El Salvador, his party would render whatever assistance it could to prevent a Marxist takeover. [redacted]

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The Guatemalan armed forces are frustrated over US policies and harbor some sentiment for intervention on behalf of the right in El Salvador. In 1977, when Guatemalan-UK tensions were at their height, the Salvadoran armed forces were the only Central American military to supply arms--albeit only a token amount--to build the arsenal of their Guatemalan colleagues. Guatemalan officers characterize progressive Salvadoran military leaders--such as junta member Colonel Majano--as Communists, but strong ties exist between the more conservative members of the two military institutions. [redacted]

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The Central American business community is also tightly knit, and the ideological kinship between Guatemalan and Salvadoran entrepreneurs may account for some cross-border aid. [REDACTED]

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It seems unlikely, however, that external assistance to the Salvadoran right will become as crucial as Cuban and other foreign assistance is to the extreme left. [REDACTED]

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III. Origins of Terrorist Acts

The level of politically motivated violence in El Salvador has reached new heights since the implementation of major socioeconomic reforms and increased security measures in March. [REDACTED]

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Of 212 deaths reported in the two-week period ending on 20 April, 73 persons were killed by security forces, 118 by the radical left, and 21 by the extreme right--reflecting the general pattern since February. In recent weeks, however, a growing number of bodies have been discovered with no clues to the assassins' identity. Rightwing death squads are increasingly active and more deaths probably are attributable to them. Search operations by the military also have continued to produce civilian casualties. [REDACTED]

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