

8 August 1984

*I note
end, Para 3*

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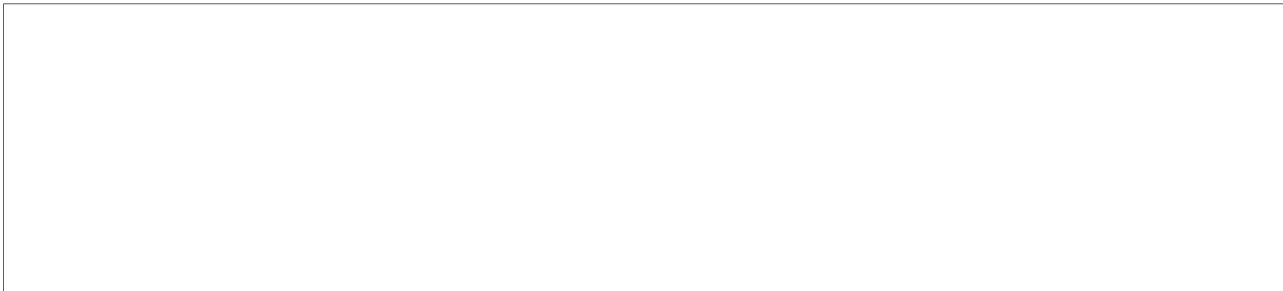
MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: SA/DCI/IA

SUBJECT: Your Thursday Meeting with Rear Admiral Poindexter,
9 August 1984

1. You are scheduled to meet with Admiral Poindexter, Thursday evening at 5:00 p.m. in his office.


2. The NSC had only one item for Thursday's agenda. This concerns:



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3. For our part, you may wish to raise the following items:

-- Soviet Activities in the Grain Market. Last week during the DDCI's session with Admiral Poindexter, the Admiral speculated that the reason the Soviets were so active in the grain market now might be that they were anticipating breaking the grain agreement just prior to the election. This, of course, would be part of their effort to embarrass the Administration. He asked what we thought of this scenario and a response was promised. At TAB B is a paper that you can hand over to the Admiral. This paper notes that: the Soviets are indeed buying unusual amounts of grain from the US. Moreover, we cannot exclude that they are planning actions that could involve, or lead to an embargo--this is because delivery commitments are all fairly early, September-December; none extend into next year. However, the more likely explanation is that they are hedging against a poor harvest outlook. (It is my understanding that this paper, should you concur, will be turned into a NID.)

-- L-39 Aircraft for Nicaragua. Fritz Ermarth and  have done talking points for you on this one, which are at TAB C. As you know, L-39s may be slated for delivery to Nicaragua. These trainer aircraft have hard points for gravity bombs and have had air-to-air missiles associated with them. Thus, they could represent a

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modest enhancement of Nicaraguan military capabilities. More importantly, this could be the start of a progression leading to the delivery of modern fighter aircraft to Nicaragua. The USG has a stated policy that it will not countenance this, but the question is just what will the USG do if L-39s are sent to Nicaragua; and after that if MIGs are sent? It seems like this ought to be thought about now. Also at this TAB are tables that describe the L-39 and other aircraft in the region.

- Leaks. In light of the latest developments [redacted] I have asked for talking points, which are at TAB D, that allow you to stress your concerns about this most serious example of the insecurity of national security information. Also at this TAB is the DDI/CRES assessment of the damage caused by the JANES publication of [redacted] as well as the example in the Washington Post.

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4. If I can be of any additional assistance as you prepare for this meeting, please call

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TALKING POINTS ON JET FIGHTERS TO NICARAGUA

TAB 11/11

A majority of NFIB agencies believe that the Soviets will send L-39s to Nicaragua before November as part of a process leading to the deployment of MiGs later.

A more optimistic case can be made: The L-39s are a substitute for MiGs for a long period, not a precursor to MiGs.

A much more pessimistic case is also possible: If the Soviets see that L-39s will be tolerated, they may rush in MiGs before the election to exploit a moment of maximum inhibition on the US response. This may be unlikely, but cannot be excluded.

Logic says (unfortunately we have no explicit evidence) the Soviets have two motives:

Exploit US elections to introduce the fighters needed to give Nicaragua a not-incredible air defense.

Create a nasty crisis (which they can afford to lose) to embarrass the President acutely before November.

Which ever has priority, there is pressure on the Soviets to move fast. This does not mean for certain they will act. Their inherent caution may stop or slow things down. But we cannot be sure at the moment.

The policy community is debating how to react: Should L-39s be treated "just like MiGs" or should they be regarded as "tolerable"? Should we precede L-39 arrival in Nicaragua, assuming we see them coming, with a demarche to the Soviets, and of what content, or wait till they get there? Should we try to ignore the matter until after the elections?

These issues are important, but they duck the crucial one: What are we going to do if the "intolerable" (however defined) occurs? An air strike? Covert/irregular operation of some kind? What? And with what confidence in success?

We could try some "graduated escalation", such as constant overflights of Nicaragua with threats to attack ground sites if fired upon, or blockade actions.

This approach would draw the whole thing out, allow political pressures on Washington to intensify, and possibly give the Soviets an opportunity to put the screws to us elsewhere, specifically in Berlin.

When the US acts as a superpower in an East-West confrontational issue, it must if at all possible act with swiftness, decisiveness, and awesome

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conclusiveness. Above all, if we warn that something is intolerable, it will be disastrous for the President and for his foreign policy if we are seen wallowing around in political and operational doubts.

This is exactly what happened to Jimmy Carter on the Soviet brigade in Cuba; it helped end his presidency.

If the Soviets have a political aim beyond just getting jet fighters into Nicaragua, it would be to do the same thing to Ronald Reagan.

The first order of business is to create the operational plan or plans to take out aircraft targets, plans in which we have operational and political confidence whenever they may be needed.

If there is real doubt about the willingness of the administration to follow through on them when the intolerable occurs, then it would be much better to back quietly away from the position that advanced fighters are intolerable before there is a big bloodletting within the bureaucracy.

Once the issues are squarely faced, there will probably be a strong desire to keep the whole thing under wraps until after the elections.

Be prepared, however, for the L-39 story to leak. The opposition is likely to start claiming that the Administration plans "acts of war" against Nicaragua after the election.

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CENTRAL AMERICA-CUBA: SELECTED AIRCRAFT COMPARISONS

<u>Aircraft Type</u> (series production begun)	<u>Country</u> (inventory)	<u>Principal Uses/ Employment</u>	<u>Combat Radius*</u> (nm)	<u>Speed*</u> (knots)	<u>Armament*</u>	<u>Comment</u>
L-39 (1972)	Cuba ²⁹ (30)	Basic and advanced jet trainer; ground support/ reconnaissance	320	378	L-39ZA (attack/recon version): single 23 mm dual-barrelled cannon; four underwing hardpoints which can accommodate various combinations of bombs up to 500 kgs; four air-to-surface rocket pods (16 57mm rockets each); infrared air-to-air missiles	Capable of limited operations operating from unimproved airstrips
Super Mystere (1950s)	Honduras (14)	Fighter; ground support	250-350	650 (Mach 1.12)	Two 30-mm cannon; can carry infrared air-to-air missiles, or two 500kg bombs	Only three operational--five to seven flyable; pilots fly only about 2 hours per month
CASA-101 (1978)	Honduras (2)	Basic and advanced trainer; ground support	150-200	350	Honduras is considering adding 30-mm cannon and machineguns. Can be fitted with six weapons pylons for rocket pods, 125kg or 250kg bombs, or pod-mounted machineguns / CASA-101	Two more on order, delivery possible later this month

A-37B (1968)	Honduras (10) Guatemala (10) El Salvador (5)	Ground support/ light attack	140	440	Can carry up to 2,200 kgs of conventional bombs and rockets on eight external wing pylons. One 7.62-mm minigun	Can be used from short ^{unimproved} airstrips (500 meter minimum) <i>Capable of limited operations</i>
T-33 (1948)	Nicaragua (3) Guatemala (3)	Limited ground attack/counter-insurgency role	378	455	None as originally designed, but modified in Nicaragua's case to accept four single <u>rockets under each wing</u> <i>or small bombs</i>	Nicaragua uses T-33 primarily for strip alert; only two appear operational at any one time. Only one believed operational in Guatemala
G-21 (1960-1973)	Cuba (114: 20-C/E/F 94-J/L/N)	Fighter/ interceptor; ground support	310-410 (w/o ext fuel tanks) 420-490 (w/ tanks)	1,205 (Mach 2.1)	Standard armament includes one 23-mm gun; four air-to-air missiles, up to four 250kg or 500kg bombs, or up to four rocket pods with 16 or 32 rockets each	Prepared runway of 800-1,000 meters required for operation

* NOTE: Figures given represent generalized characteristics which will vary according to mission, fuel, and payload.

This table is classified SECRET in its entirety.