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'Cubans all over, U.S. nowhere' in Caribbean

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WASHINGTON — Government leaders from the Caribbean have told American officials that "Cubans are all over the place in the Caribbean," even during secretaries at a foreign ministers conference in Jamaica to get information and promote Cuban interests.

By contrast, the officials complained that the "United States was nowhere to be found." One asked that the U.S. do more to prevent leftist coups in the area, including organizing a regional coast guard. The U.S. might send more of its warships into the Caribbean, this official said.

These items were relayed to the White House by Robert Pastor, National Security Council expert on Latin America, in a secret memorandum obtained by The Tribune. Pastor, in a report dated June 16, said Henry Forde, foreign minister of Barbados, told him he was "extremely concerned about the expansion of Cuban influence in the Caribbean."

RELAYING HIS talks with Forde, Pastor wrote:

"At a recent foreign ministers' conference in Jamaica, he said that the Cubans took out a large number of rooms in the hotel where all the foreign ministers were staying and even went so far as trying to date the secretaries as a way to get information. They sought interviews with all the foreign ministers."

What worries Forde and other Caribbean leaders is a return by Castro to a policy of exporting revolution there, and a lack of U.S. response. After nearly a decade of directing his attention elsewhere, Castro has once again begun providing arms and advice to leftist guerrillas in Caribbean countries.

Forde told Pastor that Prime Minister Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago, and Premier Lee Moore of St. Kitts and Nevis, were concerned, too.

WILLIAMS WAS said to be cutting off aid to Guyana because it had become involved with the leftist movement in Grenada. Williams and Moore were said to be interested in a coast guard "to be a regional strike force to prevent a repetition of the Grenada coup."

According to an assessment by the CIA, Castro has his own doming theory. He believes the eventual fall of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua will have a "ripple effect" throughout Central America and the Caribbean, bringing a wave of the leftist governments. Unlike his solo efforts at fomenting revolution in the 1960s, this time Castro intends to work with other Latin governments, using them as intermediaries to deliver arms and making sure Cuban assistance does not differ in kind and quantity from that of other countries.

Castro does not want to risk a confrontation with the U.S., the CIA said. Therefore, the intelligence agency considers it unlikely he will send troops to aid a revolutionary movement.

CASTRO HAS concentrated on Nicaragua, using Panamanian air force planes and Costa Rican landing fields to funnel arms to leftist Sandinista guerrillas, hundreds of whom were trained in Cuba. Details of the Nicaraguan operation were disclosed last week when The Tribune obtained a secret memorandum prepared by the CIA and distributed to government agencies.

The memo described how Cubans loaded mortars, 50-caliber machine guns, and rifles aboard Panamanian government planes and ferried them to the guerrillas. State Department sources confirmed that the operation continues, adding that Cuba is but one supplier of the Sandinistas. One source said the Government of Panama has provided even larger quantities of arms than Cuba.

Castro has been busy in other Latin nations as well. His activities have reached into Jamaica, Guatemala, El Salvador, and nations of the West Indies, including Grenada.

MANY CONGRESSMEN, especially those concerned with the security of the Panama Canal once it is turned over to Panama, have criticized the Carter administration for withholding from the public details of the Cuban and Panamanian involvement in Nicaragua.

"This administration views Cuba as a potential friend or neutral influence," said Rep. Robert Bauman (R., Md.), a critic of the Panama Canal treaties. "We have done nothing but cover up what Panama has been doing. Why haven't we pressured the Panamanians to stop the Cubans from sending arms through them?"

One high CIA official, who asked not to be identified, said Castro's aid to Nicaraguan leftists exceeds the items cited in the memo, which was dated May 2. This official said

THE U.S. HAS two main aims right now: to turn over the canal to Panama and to stop Communists from taking over in Nicaragua. In recent days, with Congressional approval of enabling legislation for the Panama Canal treaties virtually assured, the Carter administration for the first time has publicly mentioned Cuban aid to the Sandinista guerrillas, apparently as a way of raising the spectre of a Communist coup in Nicaragua.

The CIA in May summarized Castro's intentions this way:

"The Castro regime apparently concluded by at least last fall that prospects for revolutionary upheaval in Central America over the next decade or so had markedly improved largely because of the weakened position of Nicaragua's Somoza and the ripple effect his removal would have on other countries in Central America.

"As a result, Cuba has intensified its attempt to unify insurgent groups not only in Nicaragua — where Cuba has concentrated its efforts — but in Guatemala and El Salvador as well."

IN GUATEMALA, Cuba has maintained close links with the Guerrilla Army of the Poor which is known by its Spanish initials EGP. The CIA said Cuba has limited its support to Guatemalan leftists, insisting that they must first stop fighting among themselves.

"According to a reliable Guatemalan source, on Jan. 12 a Cuban official met in Guatemala with leaders of the EGP, the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), and the dissident wing of the Guatemalan Communist Party (PGT)," the memo said. "The Cuban official counseled them to coordinate plans of actions, to integrate training of their members, and to make a greater effort to infiltrate labor movements."

The Cubans have stepped up training of EGP guerrillas in Cuba, a practice they have maintained for "some years."

The Cubans have worked to encourage the orthodox faction of the Guatemalan Community Party (PGT) to lend its support to local insurgent groups, the memo continued.

"The Cubans clearly feel no urgency in promoting revolutionary activity in Guatemala," the memo concluded. "Rather, their efforts seem designed to prepare local insurgent groups for the long haul."

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