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INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT

23 FEBRUARY 1987

THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN NICARAGUA

This Interagency Intelligence Assessment was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for Latin America. The Assessment was coordinated at the working level within the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the Intelligence organization of the Department of State. Also participating were the Intelligence organizations of the Departments of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; and the Headquarters, Marine Corps. Information available as of 18 February 1987 was used in the preparation of this Assessment.

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INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT 87-10003
THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN NICARAGUA

The Intelligence Community has recently reviewed its information and analysis of the Cuban military and civilian presence in Nicaragua. As a result, we have reaffirmed our previous estimate that some 2,000 to 2,500 Cuban military and security advisers and technicians are in Nicaragua, although we believe that more Cubans may now be directly assisting Sandinista counterinsurgency units in the field. At the same time, we have reduced our estimate of the number of Cuban civilian personnel in Nicaragua to about 2,000 to 2,500 as a result of a drawdown in Cuban construction personnel. Thus, our overall estimate is that about 4,000 to 5,000 Cubans are currently serving in Nicaragua. [REDACTED]

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DISCUSSION

[REDACTED] several hundred Cuban additional military personnel were sent to Nicaragua in late 1986, as a result of a Sandinista desire for more Cuban assistance throughout its military structure. The Cubans were to be assigned to counterinsurgency battalions and other specialized units. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Cuban advisers were serving primarily at the major unit headquarters level rather than with tactical units in the field. This new information indicates Managua may have wanted greater assistance at the tactical level in response to the renewal of US military aid to the insurgents and in expectation of an increased level of fighting over the next several months. [REDACTED]

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The assignment of several hundred additional Cuban advisers to tactical units is not sufficient justification to revise the overall estimate of some 2,000 to 2,500 Cuban military advisers in Nicaragua, particularly because we believe that prior to the end of last year, the number was gradually being reduced. Nevertheless, the Intelligence Community will watch closely for signs of a more substantial increase should the military situation worsen considerably or should the Sandinistas receive more sophisticated air defense weapons such as SA-2/3s. Conversely, we will also watch for a potential drawdown of the Cuban presence should Congress cut off further aid to the insurgents. [REDACTED]

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Concerning the Cuban civilian presence, we had earlier estimated that they numbered some 3,500 to 4,000, including about 2,000 construction personnel and a large number of advisers in various government ministries. These construction personnel were involved in a number of major projects, including rail and road construction, a new sugar mill, and airfield improvements. Most of these projects have now been completed or scaled back, with a likely reduction of Cuban personnel. Punta Huete airbase remains as a major unfinished construction project, and work is continuing there at a slow pace. [REDACTED]

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As a result, we now estimate that only some 500 Cuban construction personnel remain in Nicaragua. Thus, the overall number of Cuban civilians serving there probably has been reduced by 1,500 to some 2,000 to 2,500. We believe the total number of Cubans in Nicaragua is about 4,000 to 5,000, including equal numbers of military and civilian personnel.

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CUBAN PERSONNEL IN NICARAGUA
FEBRUARY 1987

	<u>Previous Estimate</u>	<u>Current Estimate</u>
<u>Military</u>	2,000 to 2,500	2,000 to 2,500
<u>Civilian</u>	3,500 to 4,000	2,000 to 2,500
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TOTAL	5,500 to 6,500	4,000 to 5,000

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