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NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

18 APR 1980

Dear Zbig,

Attached is the monthly report on Cuba-Nicaragua: Support for Central American Revolutionaries. We appreciate your evaluation of this report--dated 27 March--and are pleased that you and your staff find it valuable. In response to your request for more information on Cuban training for insurgents, we have included specific information on the numbers of Central American revolutionaries going to Havana and the travel routes they are taking.

Yours,

[Redacted Signature]

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Bruce C. Clarke Jr.
Director

Attachment: a/s

The Honorable Zbigniew Brzezinski
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

15 April 1980

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MEMORANDUM

CUBA-NICARAGUA: SUPPORT FOR CENTRAL AMERICAN INSURGENCIES (U)

SUMMARY

Cuba reacted to Salvadoran Archbishop Romero's murder last month by launching a strong campaign to link the US Government to the killing. It also reportedly cautioned Salvadoran leftists against using the incident to provoke a direct confrontation with the junta and rightist forces. (S NF NC OC)

Cuba continues to train, arm, and advise Salvadoran insurgents; in addition, the PLO--at Soviet and Cuban urging--is providing training and funding. (S NF NC OC)

During the past month, mounting evidence indicates that arms for Salvadoran leftists are being funneled clandestinely through Costa Rica and that small numbers of insurgents may be receiving training in northern parts of that country. The Costa Rican Minister of Public Security and several of his subordinates probably are directly involved in supporting such clandestine activities. President Carazo may have had some knowledge of these activities, and the government will come under increasing pressure to curtail such clandestine support. (S)

We also have unconfirmed reports that as of mid-March, the Nicaraguans were providing guerrilla training for some 250 Salvadorans

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 Service and the Office of Strategic Research. Information in this memorandum reflects information available through 15 April 1980.

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in northern Nicaragua and that a new international brigade is being formed in Panama--similar to that which fought in Nicaragua--for service in El Salvador and Guatemala. Nonetheless, reports of the brigade's plans appear overblown, suggesting that the Panamanian brigade leader is exaggerating his support to attract recruits. (S NF NC OC)

At the same time, however, the Panamanian Government increasingly appears to be hedging its bets on the outcome in El Salvador, partly by facilitating increased travel through Panama of insurgents for Cuban training. General Torrijos also is probably giving his high level leftist advisers increasingly free rein in providing support to the Salvadoran left. [redacted]

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Havana's efforts to spur support and cooperation among Guatemalan insurgent groups

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[redacted] *Hondurans recently completed guerrilla and intelligence training in Cuba, and another group is being sent to Cuba for training via Panama City.* [redacted]

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EL SALVADOR

[redacted] *in late March the Cuban Ambassador to Panama stated that Havana viewed the murder of Salvadoran Archbishop Romero as a plot by rightwing elements in El Salvador to lure the left into the open where it could be crushed by military and rightist forces. The Ambassador reportedly said that Havana--believing that the left is not yet prepared for such a direct confrontation--advised Salvadoran leftist groups through the Revolutionary Coordinator of the Masses not to take to the streets to protest the killing. (S NF NC OC)*

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Following Romero's murder, Havana launched a determined and seemingly vindictive propaganda campaign asserting that the United States bears the "gravest responsibility" for the killing; accusing Washington of collusion with the local oligarchy and the military junta; and describing the US Ambassador to El Salvador as an interventionist and a provocateur. One editorial noted that Romero had just spoken out against Washington's plans to intervene in El Salvador and that his murder was preceded immediately by official US statements accusing Cuba of supplying arms to the Salvadorans. (U)

Commenting on the media attack, a senior Cuban official indicated privately that Havana resented recent US statements that the Castro regime was behind the violence in El Salvador. He said that although Cuba had never hidden its association with revolutionary groups in El Salvador, the violence there was not of Cuba's making. (C)

Havana's vehement campaign linking the US to Romero's murder is not typical of its normal propaganda on El Salvador, suggesting that Castro may have intended it as a warning against further US accusations of Cuban support for Salvadoran terrorists. Havana apparently is attempting to demonstrate its capability to deal with an escalation in US rhetoric. (C)



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reporting that 18 to 20 Salvadoran leftists, some Nicaraguans, and an unspecified number of South Americans were being trained by the PLO--probably at Cuban and Soviet urging--near Beirut in the use of bazookas, machine guns, mortars, and all types of demolition equipment and explosives. We previously reported that the PLO was under pressure from the USSR and Cuba to provide training and financial support for Latin American revolutionary movements. (S NF NC OC)

The Costa Rican Connection

The mounting evidence and public accusations of a Costa Rican connection with the Salvadoran insurgents

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leads us to believe that:

--The Salvadoran guerrillas and their allies have used Costa Rica as a safehaven and have received arms on a small scale through Costa Rica.

--Small numbers of insurgents have been trained in Costa Rica.

--Such clandestine activities have the support of Public Security Minister Echeverria, [redacted]

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--President Carazo may have had some knowledge of these activities, and the government will come under increasing pressure to curtail such clandestine support.

A Costa Rican citizen who lives in northern Costa Rica recently told a US Embassy officer in San Jose that in early March he personally observed a DC-6 land at Liberia airport in northwestern Costa Rica and unload rations, weapons, and supplies onto a pickup truck. The Costa Rican was told by an airport official whom he knows well that the airport administrator had traveled to Cuba in late February and that the DC-6 flight was but one of several. [redacted]

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The Costa Rican also maintained that an estate in the area which had been used to train Sandinistas last year now was occupied by some 60 Salvadoran, Nicaraguan, and Costa Rican guerrillas. They reportedly were receiving training from three persons, including a female member of the FSLN.
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In late March, the Minister of Defense in El Salvador stated publicly that large shipments of arms and subversive propaganda are being brought into El Salvador from Costa Rica and that Salvadoran insurgents had been operating in northern Costa Rica for some time. He did not accuse the Costa Rican Government of complicity but said he had urged Security Minister Echeverria to take action. (U)

San Jose newspapers have launched a major press campaign demanding a full government investigation, noting that over 200 small airfields in Costa Rica could be used for arms smuggling without the government's knowledge. Demands by the Costa Rican media that the government--and particularly its Security Minister--not become involved in the subversion of El Salvador contrast sharply with the widespread self-censorship the press imposed on Costa Rican assistance to the Sandinistas until the final stages of the Nicaraguan civil war. The strong public outcry will make future clandestine operations more difficult. (C)

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We do not have any reporting that bears directly on President Carazo's cognizance of such clandestine activities. Nonetheless, we suspect that he may have had some knowledge of these actions; such operations and the rumored involvement of high level individuals have been an open secret. The explosive political potential of the charges and Carazo's relative inaction also argue that the President may not have been totally ignorant. (S)

The recent media outcry and the greater political costs of a continuation of these activities as the pre-campaign for the 1982 elections gets underway strongly suggest that Carazo will take measures to curtail the support. A mix of factors--including official complicity, the availability of substantial sums of money for bribes, an already functioning support structure, and limited security force capabilities--makes it unlikely, however, that clandestine support will be completely stopped. (S)

Panamanian Involvement

Havana continues to utilize Panama as a transit point for Central American insurgents traveling to and from Cuba for training. [redacted] in February and March alone Panama expedited the travel of some 320 Central American leftists--mostly Salvadorans--to Cuba for training. [redacted]

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[redacted] members of the international brigade--led by former government official Hugo Spadafora--that fought alongside the FSLN during the Nicaraguan civil war are now recruiting new volunteers to fight in El Salvador and Guatemala. [redacted]

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Training in Nicaragua

As of mid-February 250 Salvadorans were receiving training at an FSLN-controlled camp just north of Cosiquina in northern Nicaragua. [redacted]

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[redacted] The trainees were receiving instruction in guerrilla warfare [redacted] and the camp still was functioning in mid-March. [redacted]

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THE GUATEMALAN INSURGENCY



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[redacted] A small number of Cuban advisers may be assisting several of these groups, but they probably are operating in a liaison capacity or were sent to the country on a temporary basis to assess the guerrillas' strength and needs. [redacted]

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HONDURAN DEVELOPMENTS



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all of the 40 to 50 members of the special apparatus who were receiving guerrilla and intelligence training in Cuba now have returned to Honduras. Another group of approximately the same size-- which fought in Nicaragua--also has completed its training. All the trainees returned to Honduras via Panama City, traveling on Cuban documentation in several small groups.

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