

~~SECRET MORAY~~

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

20 June 1980

MEMORANDUMCuba-Nicaragua: Support for Central American Insurgencies (U)Summary

Revolutionary unity and solidarity emerged as major themes in Central America during the past month, highlighted by the decision of Guatemala's four main insurrectional groups--at Cuban urging--to form a united front. Castro reportedly repeated the promises of greater financial aid and training--though still short of direct arms shipments--that he used successfully several years ago to resolve differences within Nicaragua's Sandinist movement. The Guatemalan revolutionaries' "unity" declaration, however, seems at this juncture to represent more hope than reality, since--as they themselves acknowledge--there are still significant obstacles to overcome. ~~XS~~ [redacted]

(b)(3)

Information from a number of reports and sources, although still scattered and fragmentary, tends to confirm the existence of land, sea, and air "routes" for arms shipments through Nicaragua to El Salvador. but Managua's involvement remains veiled and deniable. ~~XS~~ [redacted]

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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 Directorate of Operations and the Office of Strategic Research. Information in this memorandum reflects information available through 15 June 1980.

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At a mid-May meeting in Havana, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Organization of People in Arms (ORPA), the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), and the dissident faction of the Guatemalan Communist Party (PGT) agreed to enter into a "popular and democratic front," which at the moment is probably little more than a loose working alliance among the guerrilla groups. (See 15 April 1980 memorandum, pp. 7-8, for reports on earlier Cuban efforts to bring these organizations together.)

[redacted] the head of the umbrella organization is called the Coordinator for the Revolutionary Forces for the Liberation of Guatemala. (S [redacted])

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Fidel Castro's personal role in bringing about even this much unity among the guerrilla organizations is detailed in reports from other sources. At the Havana meeting, for example, the Cuban leader is said to have offered the groups both training and funds to purchase arms. He explained that he could not undertake direct shipment of arms to Guatemala because of the political damage to Cuba if it were discovered. (S [redacted])

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In regard to the training, Castro is alleged to have acknowledged that 250 Guatemalan revolutionaries from ORPA, FAR, and the EGP were now in Cuba, and he offered to accept an additional 50 from the PGT dissidents. The group is said to be selecting its first 25 candidates, who reportedly will travel to Cuba via Nicaragua for the training, which is supposedly to last at least six weeks. (S [redacted])

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Castro also urged the dissidents to establish a permanent representative in Havana, as other radical leftist groups had done, as this would give the dissidents a chance to "meet comrades from all over the world and . . . appeal to them for help." The dissidents reportedly have decided to hold the offer in abeyance, however, largely because their political commission could not agree on a candidate. (S [redacted])

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Apparently feeling considerable urgency about the situation in Central America, and in Guatemala especially, Castro reportedly said that "the time for words, for politics, was past, the fight is here and now." The Cuban leader explained that the pressure to have "revolutionaries" trained and in place as soon as possible arises from several factors. One is his feeling that there is an imminent threat to the position of President Lucas, who Castro believes should be kept in office because he is "stupid" and is alienating the Guatemalan people. Another element is the possibility that the US would recognize what is happening and become directly involved. (S [redacted])

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Moreover, the revolutionaries are concerned about the recent announcement in Paris by Guatemalan political exiles that they had formed a so-called Patriotic Liberation Front. This supposedly broad coalition, which has so far received scant support from anti-government groups in Guatemala, was considered by the guerrillas to be a preemptive effort that threatens the "correct road of armed revolution." (S [redacted])

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Despite Castro's urgings, and the public pledge of the four guerrilla groups to strive to overcome their differences, their announced unity seems fragile. Even the declaration published by Prensa Latina on 26 May acknowledged that the four groups "still had problems to solve." Aside from the personal jealousies and conflicting ambitions of the various leaders, the main stumbling blocks reportedly are:

- What groups and sectors should be included in the political Broad Front (Frente Amplio) the revolutionaries want to form, and what role this Frente should play.
- Whether or not the guerrilla groups should try to "win over" younger and supposedly more reform-minded officers in the Guatemalan military.

(S [redacted])

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