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SPECIAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE  
NUMBER 81-57

Security Conditions in Mexico

Submitted by

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DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

as indicated overleaf

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NOTE: This is the estimate. No further dissemination will be made.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

12 October 1967

SUBJECT: SNIP 81-67: SECURITY CONDITIONS IN MEXICO

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the likelihood of incidents which would endanger President Johnson during his visit to Ciudad Juárez on 28 October 1967.

CONCLUSION

We believe that the Mexican security services will manage to keep untoward incidents to a minimum and that the risks entailed in President Johnson's brief visit will be small. One may not, however, rule out the possibility of an assassination attempt by a psychopath or fanatic.

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DISCUSSION

1. Relations between the Mexican and US governments are extremely friendly, and President Johnson is personally popular in Mexico. The occasion for this visit is, moreover, propitious. The ceremonies in which President Johnson and President Díaz Ordaz will take part mark the amicable settlement of the long-standing Chamizal border dispute -- a settlement which returns to Mexico certain territory in the Ciudad Juárez-El Paso area.

2. The political situation in Mexico is considerably more stable than that in most Latin American countries. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) maintains a virtual monopoly over national and local politics. Not only is the PRI effective in maintaining stability generally, but it is also an important means for facilitating security for visiting foreign dignitaries, and for President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz during his public appearances in various parts of the country. At such times, the party organizes an appropriate popular reception; when travel by motorcade is involved, it lines the streets with its members and those of its youth wing.

3. The Mexican security forces are tough and reasonably competent. The Presidential Guard, the unit responsible for seeing to the safety of the Mexican President anywhere in the country, is a crack outfit. Moreover,

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Mexican legal procedures do not inhibit the police from detaining as many known or suspected trouble-makers as they consider necessary to maintain adequate safeguards. During President Johnson's visit to Mexico City in April 1966, the planning of the top Mexican security officials and the combination of measures carried out by the security forces were well devised and impressive. President Díaz Ordaz himself was responsible for such arrangements when he was Minister of Interior (1958-1964), and he continues to take an active interest in security matters.

4. There are, of course, a number of anti-US elements in Mexico. Mexico City has long been a haven for political exiles from other countries, mostly Communists and leftist extremists but also including anti-Castro Cubans. The Mexican Government is confident of its ability to control such extremist groups, and maintains surveillance over the activities of some of them. There is the possibility, however, particularly since the Mexican press has already carried stories about President Johnson's planned visit, that a few of these people will go to Ciudad Juárez to try to create disturbances or other incidents.

5. Ciudad Juárez itself, a wide-open border town of several hundred thousand people,<sup>1/</sup> contains a number of anti-Yankee groups. These are small,

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<sup>1/</sup> The most recent Mexican census (1960) gave the population as 262,000. It has since grown rapidly, and present estimates vary from 379,000 to 448,000.

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however, and not notably aggressive. Among them are the local unit of the Mexican Communist Party, which probably has no more than 30 active members, a chapter of the Popular Socialist Party, which has fewer, and the Civic Democratic Alliance, a minuscule front group which has joined them in protesting against the US role in Vietnam. The leftists most likely to attempt agitation or demonstrations are a minority group among the students at the School of Agriculture.

6. The local authorities know the identities of the leaders of all these groups; most will likely be detained or warned before the visit. The Ciudad Juárez police force is not of the same quality as that in Mexico City, but it has leftist elements cowed, is accustomed to dealing with rough customers of whatever stripe, and usually has a line on any local citizens who might be dangerous. Some 350 of the uniformed police have been assigned special duty for the time of the visit, and plainclothesmen will be mingling with the crowd.

7. Mexico's Minister of Defense is in overall command of all security forces during President Johnson's visit; the Federal Security Police are in charge of the security preparations. Army units will play a major part. The military unit normally assigned to Ciudad Juárez is the First Infantry Battalion, some 600 strong. A battalion of the Presidential Guard has already been dispatched to supplement this force, and an additional infantry battation from Mexico City is to move in soon.

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8. We therefore anticipate that a substantial force of security personnel will be provided, and that the security arrangements will be effective as they apply to controlling groups and organized activities. One may not, of course, rule out the possibility of an assassination attempt by some individual -- perhaps a psychopath or a fanatic, who could be Mexican, American, or any other nationality. This possibility is of particular concern because of the physical circumstances in which the President will be exposed to crowds while driving in an open car down relatively narrow streets of a border town.

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