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LATIN AMERICA

10. New Guerrilla Incursion in Nicaragua: Patrols of the Nicaraguan National Guard engaged in three inconclusive skirmishes with a band of guerrillas in the mountainous territory along the Honduran border on 5 and 6 May, according to guard commander General Anastasio Somoza. The guerrillas abducted an American citizen who operates a ranch in the area and apparently are holding him hostage. The band has apparently retired back across the Honduran border, but new raids are likely. The raids occurred near territory disputed between Nicaragua and Honduras. President Luis Somoza has tried thus far without success to convene the Mixed Military Commission, a joint Honduran-Nicaraguan military team organized after a series of border incidents in 1958.

General Somoza, who estimated the guerrillas to number about 60 "trained, disciplined men," told the American Embassy he has unverified reports that the guerrillas have been in radio communication with Cuba; he said local residents report seeing aircraft land on the Honduran side and disembark "bearded personnel."

There is no indication that this band of guerrillas will be any more effective against the Somoza government than the numerous others that have raided Nicaraguan territory in the past year. Other small bands of would-be rebels operating in this area as well as along the Costa Rican border failed to win support from the local populace and eventually were dispersed.

It is doubtful that the current guerrilla raids were directed from Cuba, but there may be Cubans in the band and the leaders may have received material assistance from the Castro regime. President Somoza identified the leaders of the band as pro-Communists who are sympathetic to the Castro regime, and believes that the present incursion is only part of a continuing plan of systematic armed attacks.