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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Dominican Republic: Can Balaguer Bell the Cat?

Balaguer is facing a particularly difficult dilemma. He feels the need to bring his military more under control; he would like to do this before the departure of the Inter-American Peace Force (IAPF), now scheduled for late September; but to do it so quickly risks a violent reaction by the military. One possible way out would be to ask the IAPF to stay longer, though this too would have some political cost.

1. In our last estimate on the Dominican Republic,* we noted the likelihood of further tension and disorder, and pointed out that the IAPF had become the primary stabilizing factor in the country. We also discussed the necessity, and at the same time the delicacy, of reshaping the Dominican military establishment, and we warned that if the new president moved clumsily in this, he might provoke the very military intervention he was trying to rule out.

2. The Balaguer administration, after a brief honeymoon period, is now faced with increasing suspicion, opposition and

* NIE 86.2-66, "Prospects for Stability in the Dominican Republic," published on 28 April 1966.



intrigue. Some elements on the extreme left have resumed acts of violence; some on the extreme right are plotting once again. One aspect of Balaguer's response has been the preparation of a draft law to curtail political party activity; this is antagonizing part of the moderate opposition as well. His own Reformist Party is not so well-organized or united that it provides him with a really solid base, and a number of its members are disenchanted because Balaguer has given them less patronage and more austerity than they expected.

3. But it is Balaguer's relationship to the military* that poses the most serious short-run problem. He has appointed as his own military aide an ambitious officer who is generally considered a Trujilloist and is regarded with suspicion by the defense minister and the service chiefs, who have made their views known to Balaguer. Balaguer has replaced the chief of police with a trusted associate -- but a man who seems heavier handed and lighter headed than his predecessor. He has ordered -- though not yet implemented -- the transfer of two key military units to what seem to be more reliable commands.

* This is a big establishment in a small country. Total number of military personnel is nearly 19,000. In addition, there is the National Police with about 8,500. Though not the throw-back, gorilla outfit it was in Trujillo's time, the Dominican military is still essentially a conservative force and tends to align itself with the civilian elite.

4. Balaguer has told the US Ambassador that he is determined to proceed with a reduction and thorough reorganization of the Dominican military. Although he realizes that this involves some risk, he may be underestimating how much. He has emphasized his belief that certain specific changes must be accomplished and that the broad outline of the whole plan must be established while he still has the backing of the IAPF. (IAPF strength is now down to about 5,000, and the last units are scheduled to leave in the latter part of September.) He has been giving some thought to the pros and cons of requesting an extension of the IAPF presence.

5. Many Dominican military figures are probably willing to cooperate with Balaguer in his reorganization efforts. Others in the military are bound to become restive as they see plans developed to cut back not only their numbers, but also their privileges and prerogatives. Officers already involved in conspiring with civilian rightists are likely to do more of it. Any upsurge in terrorism on the part of the extreme left or any improvement in the political fortunes of the moderate left, would probably cause more of the military to involve themselves in coup plotting.

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6. Since its inception, the IAPF has been an effective deterrent to insurgency from the left and to a coup from the right. The likelihood of these contingencies will in any case become greater when the last elements of the IAPF depart. And if, before the presently scheduled departure date in late September, Balaguer presses ahead to accomplish several of his military reform measures -- and to advertise the rest -- the chances of a military coup would be sharply increased.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



ABBOT SMITH
Acting Chairman

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