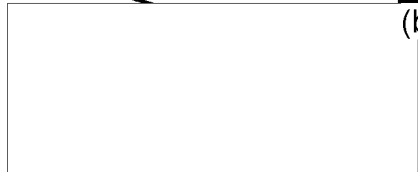**Directorate of
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Guatemala: Development and Insurgency in the Northern Frontier

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An Intelligence Assessment

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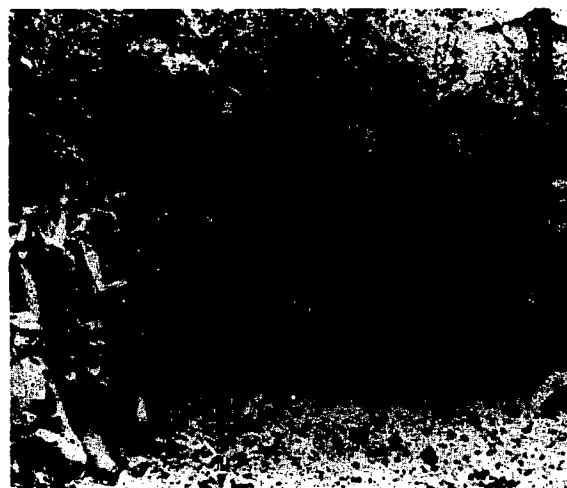GI 83-10003C

January 1983

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The Insurgency

The current insurgency in Guatemala can be traced to the early 1960s when disgruntled former Army officers and leftist students joined in a guerrilla war against the government. Dislodged from rural strongholds in the east, they turned to urban terrorism. By the early 1970s, apparently concluding that the support of the large Indian population was needed, they became active in the western highlands; for the remainder of the decade they concentrated, with some success, on recruitment and entrenchment. In 1980 ___ the number of combatant insurgents was about 2,000 and growing,

_____ insurgents controlled 85 percent of the Department of Huehuetenango. Extensive areas elsewhere were also believed to be in guerrilla hands. But over the past six months US Embassy reports ___ indicate that counterinsurgency by government forces has significantly reduced the area under insurgent control.

The three most active insurgency organizations are: the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), created in the early 1960s; the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), an offshoot of the FAR dating from the early 1970s; and the Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), a splinter group from the EGP that began operations in 1979. A November 1982 assessment placed the number of full-time insurgents at 2,000 to 3,000—with the FAR at 150 to 300, the EGP at about 1,000 to 1,300, and the ORPA at about 600 to 800. (We estimate the Guatemalan armed forces at more than 25,000 men.) The insurgents have received considerable support, including training, from Cuba, but they continue to be plagued by disunity.

Army patrol looking for insurgents. Dense vegetation covering much of the northern lowlands provides excellent hiding places and sites from which to stage ambushes.

A well-armed band of insurgents, members of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor.

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