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SPECIAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE
NUMBER 81-1-68

SECURITY CONDITIONS IN MEXICO CITY

Submitted by
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DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

as indicated overleaf

3 October 1968

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

3 October 1968

SUBJECT: SNIE 81-1-68: SECURITY CONDITIONS IN MEXICO CITY

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the likelihood of incidents that could endanger or embarrass Mr. Nixon or any other important American political figure who might visit Mexico City during the Olympic Games.^{1/}

CONCLUSIONS

A. The conflict between the government and thousands of students in Mexico City has created a situation sharply different from that which obtained during visits by President Johnson and Vice President Humphrey.

^{1/} Mr. Nixon may on 15 October make a six-hour visit to the Olympic Games and to the Olympic Village as a private citizen and not as an official guest of the Mexican Government.

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B. Although the Mexican Government would take measures to protect Mr. Nixon's personal safety during his visit, we judge that the likelihood of an incident which might embarrass or endanger any important American political figure is considerably greater now than it would have been three months ago.

DISCUSSION

1. As a result of good US-Mexican relations, the generally high level of political stability then obtaining in Mexico, and the thoroughness and efficiency with which the Mexican Government carried out its security preparations, the visits by President Johnson and Vice President Humphrey in recent years involved little or no danger to their personal safety.^{2/} As we had judged before each visit, there was no attempt at a major violent demonstration and potentially embarrassing incidents were at a minimum.

2. In view of the recurring difficulties between Mexican students and the Díaz Ordaz administration over the past two

^{2/} President Johnson in April 1966 and October 1967, and Vice President Humphrey during 31 March-1 April 1968.

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months, we cannot now make the same judgment for a possible visit by Mr. Nixon or by any other American dignitary. In order to bring student rioting under control the Mexican Government has had to resort to extensive use of its summary authority for arrest and detention and extensive employment of its police forces, backed up by army troops and tanks. There have been scores of casualties and a number of fatalities on both sides, with the students using firearms and Molotov cocktails to attack government forces and to defend student positions.

3. We believe that the situation in Mexico City will remain tense for some time to come, and that the conflict between students and the government could again erupt into violence at any moment. The more moderate student leaders may agree to forgo further violence and to open discussions with the administration. But we think that some student extremists will attempt to stage demonstrations during the Olympic Games in the expectation of embarrassing the Mexican Government.

4. If Mr. Nixon or any other important political figure from the US does visit Mexico City during the Games, we think that the Mexican security forces would have appreciably more difficulty in protecting him than has been the case for such visits in the past.

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Security forces have already been extensively deployed to cope with the danger of student violence at a number of places in and around Mexico City, including the National University which is adjacent to the Olympic Stadium, and will be further taxed by the heavy influx of visitors and increase in traffic once the Olympics begin.

5. At the present time the number of potential troublemakers is not only much greater than on previous visits, but their identities are almost certainly not as well-known to the Mexican authorities. They include not only college and university students, but a large number of students from secondary schools, many of whom have no previous record of antigovernment activity. The presence of large numbers of foreign visitors will intensify the problem of identifying potential troublemakers. Thus the security forces would have considerably greater difficulty in taking the measures, such as preventive detention, that play a large role in their security preparations.

6. We think that the Mexican Government would be able to take measures sufficient to protect Mr. Nixon during his arrival at the airport. The security arrangements at the Olympic Village and at the Olympic Stadium will be tightened in order to minimize the

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danger of hostile demonstrations. Nevertheless, the chance of an embarrassing incident, including an overreaction by security forces, is now considerably greater than has been the case on previous visits.

7. If Mr. Nixon traveled by motor car from the airport to the games, the distance involved could provide opportunities to anti-US and antigovernment elements seeking to create an embarrassing incident or one that might threaten Mr. Nixon's personal safety, either by the hostile action of demonstrators or the reaction of security forces. The fact that the visit would be unofficial would make it unlikely that Mexican security forces would take the extremely elaborate precautions customary for official visits.

8. Finally, there is always the possibility of an attempt at violence by an individual psychopath or fanatic -- from Mexico, the US, or a third country. We believe that, in view of the tensions created by recent student clashes with the police and army forces, the risk of such an attempt is greater than during past visits by US dignitaries.

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