



Directorate of Intelligence

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*CIP 31 20 100 2*

# Central America: The Refugee Dilemma (U)

An Intelligence Abstract

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Approved for Release  
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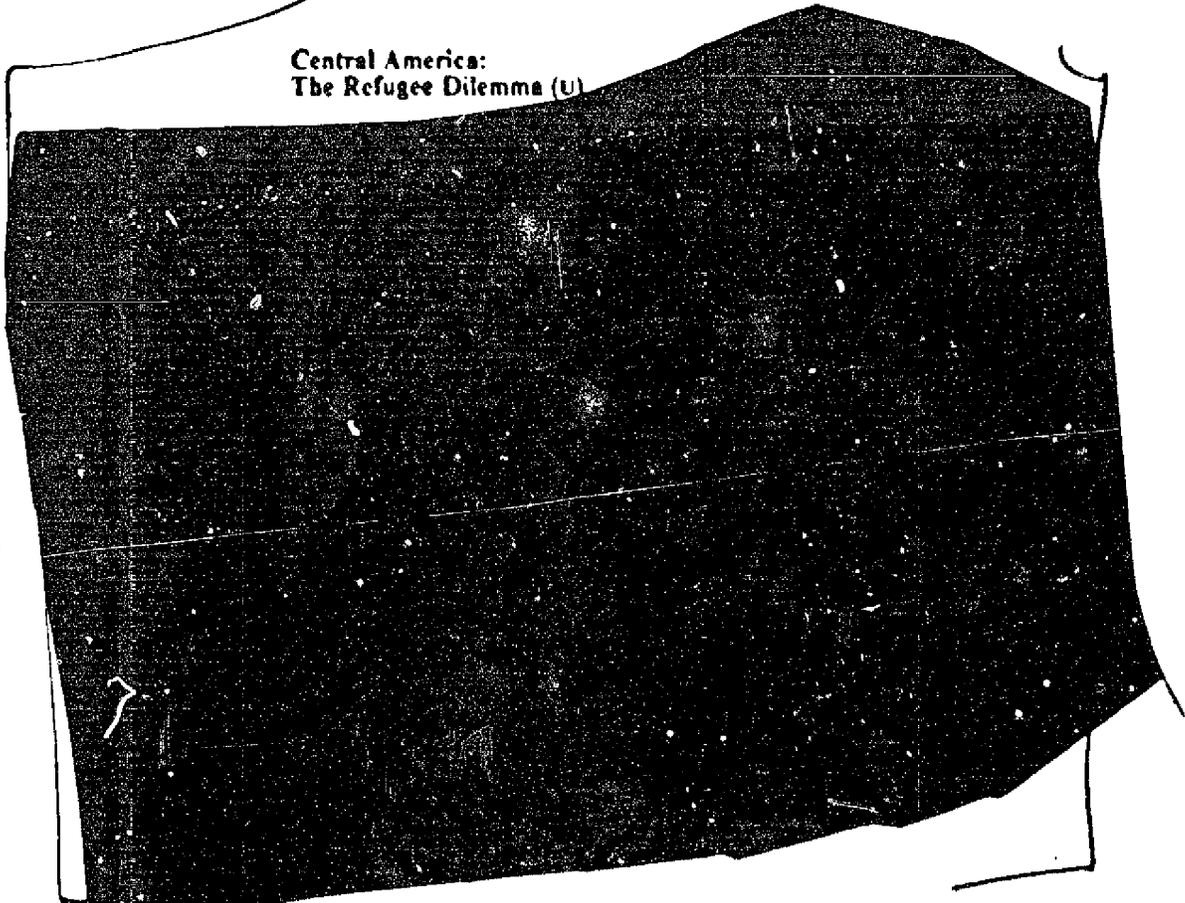
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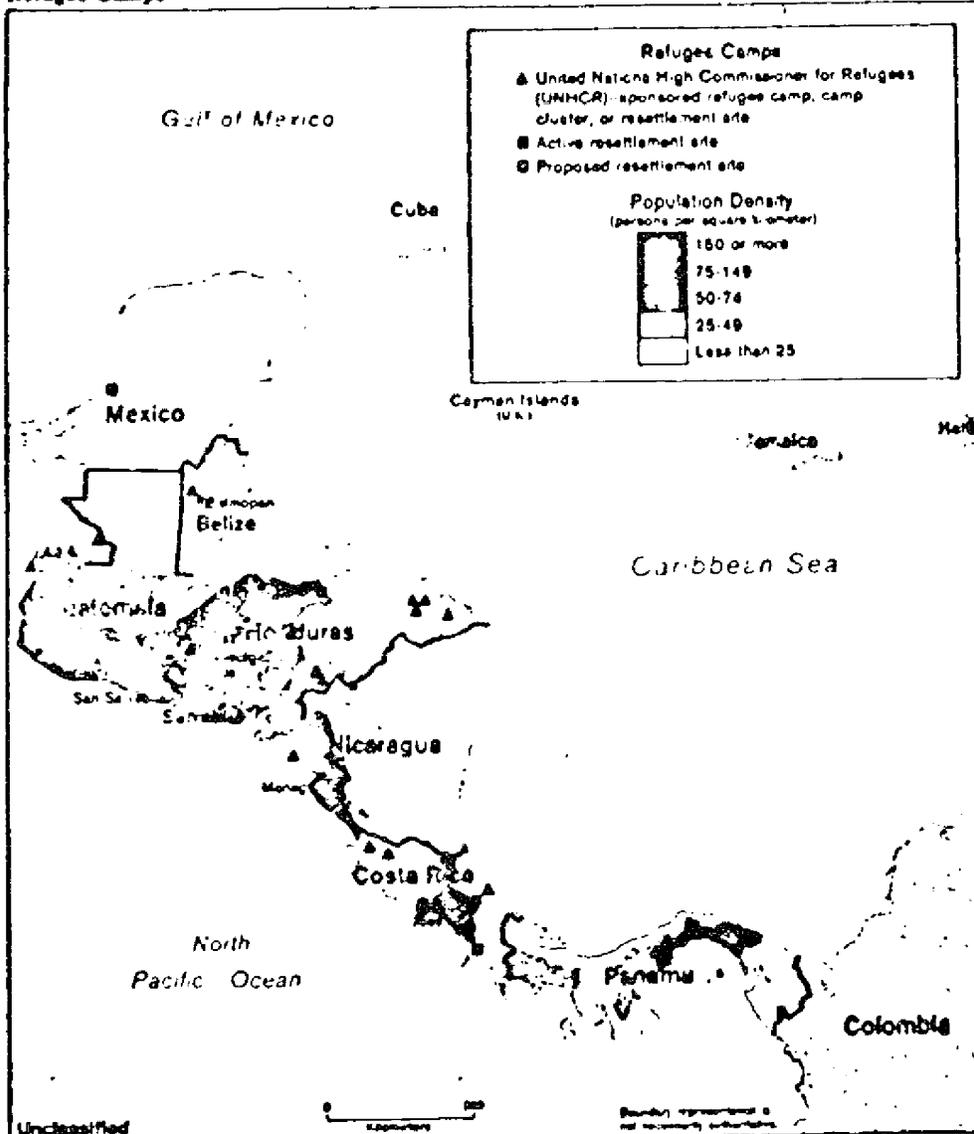
Central America:  
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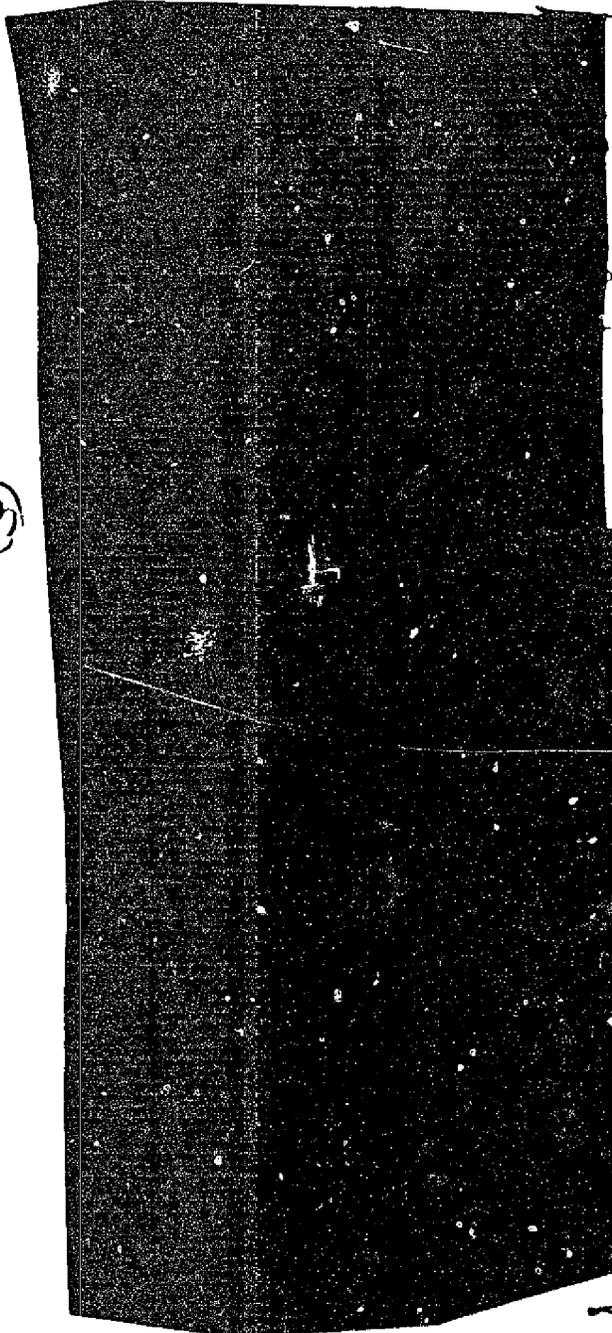
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### Refugee Camps



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*Definitions and Sources*

*People who have been forced from their homes by war or oppression are generally termed displaced persons or DPs. If they remain in their native countries, they are referred to as internally displaced persons. DPs who have fled across an international border are known as refugees. The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defined a refugee as a person who "owing to religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality (or habitual residence) and is unable, or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." In Central America, political refugees are often difficult to distinguish from people who have left their homes primarily for economic reasons (U)*

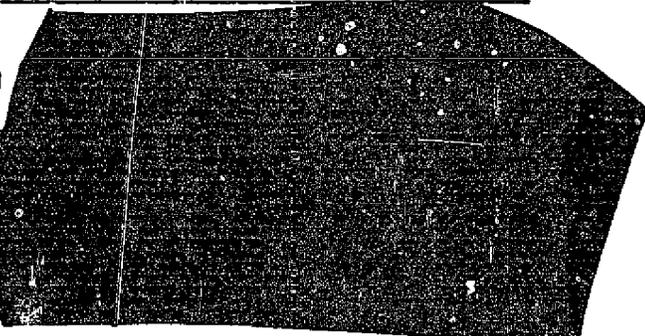
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**The United Nations  
High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

The UNHCR has programs in Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. It oversees, rather than manages, these programs, usually providing one representative and several observers in a host country. It also provides the funding for refugee needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. Aid is direct, being channeled through public or private organizations such as the Red Cross or World Relief. These, in turn, coordinate other relief efforts such as Caritas or Catholic Relief Service. The UNHCR's direct involvement in refugee programs is minimal. (U)



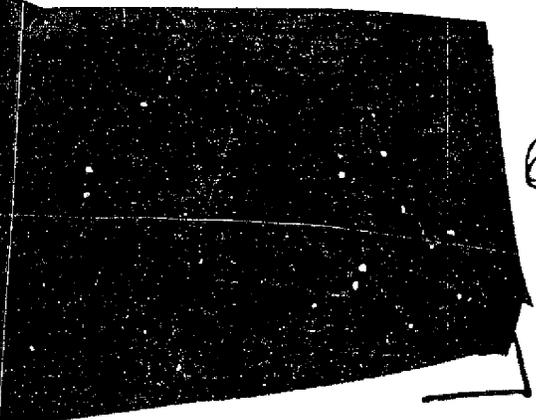
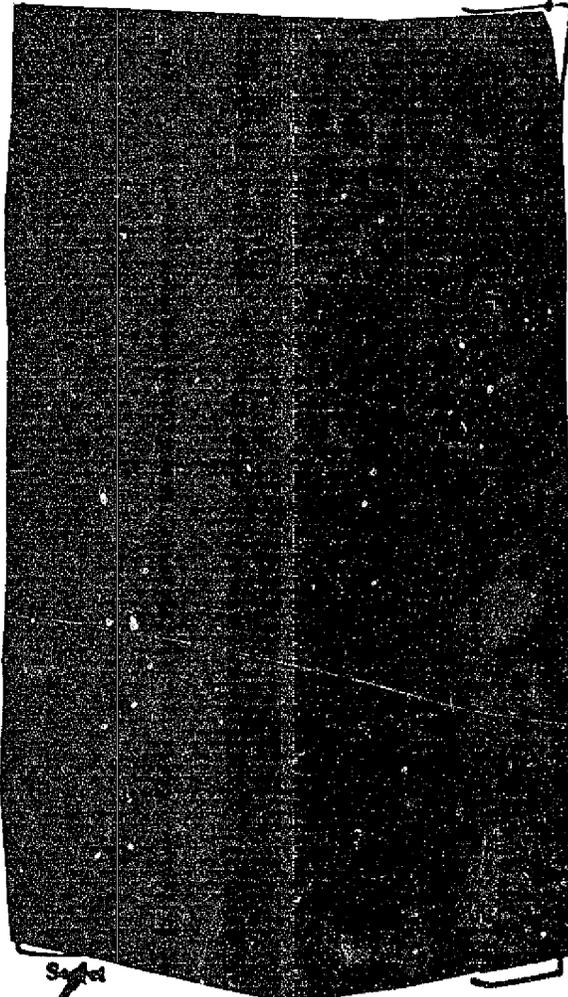
In 1983, the UNHCR expended more than \$23 million in assistance to Central American refugees, a figure that is expected to exceed \$24 million this year. Specific figures for UNHCR programs are as follows:

	Million US \$	
	1983	1984
Honduras	13.3	10.3
Costa Rica	4.7	3.5
Mexico	4.0	6.0
Nicaragua	1.0	2.4

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In addition, refugee maintenance depends on contributions by numerous private voluntary charitable organizations and government assistance in the form of services such as health care and schooling. We do not have reliable data on the costs of these types of refugee assistance. (U)

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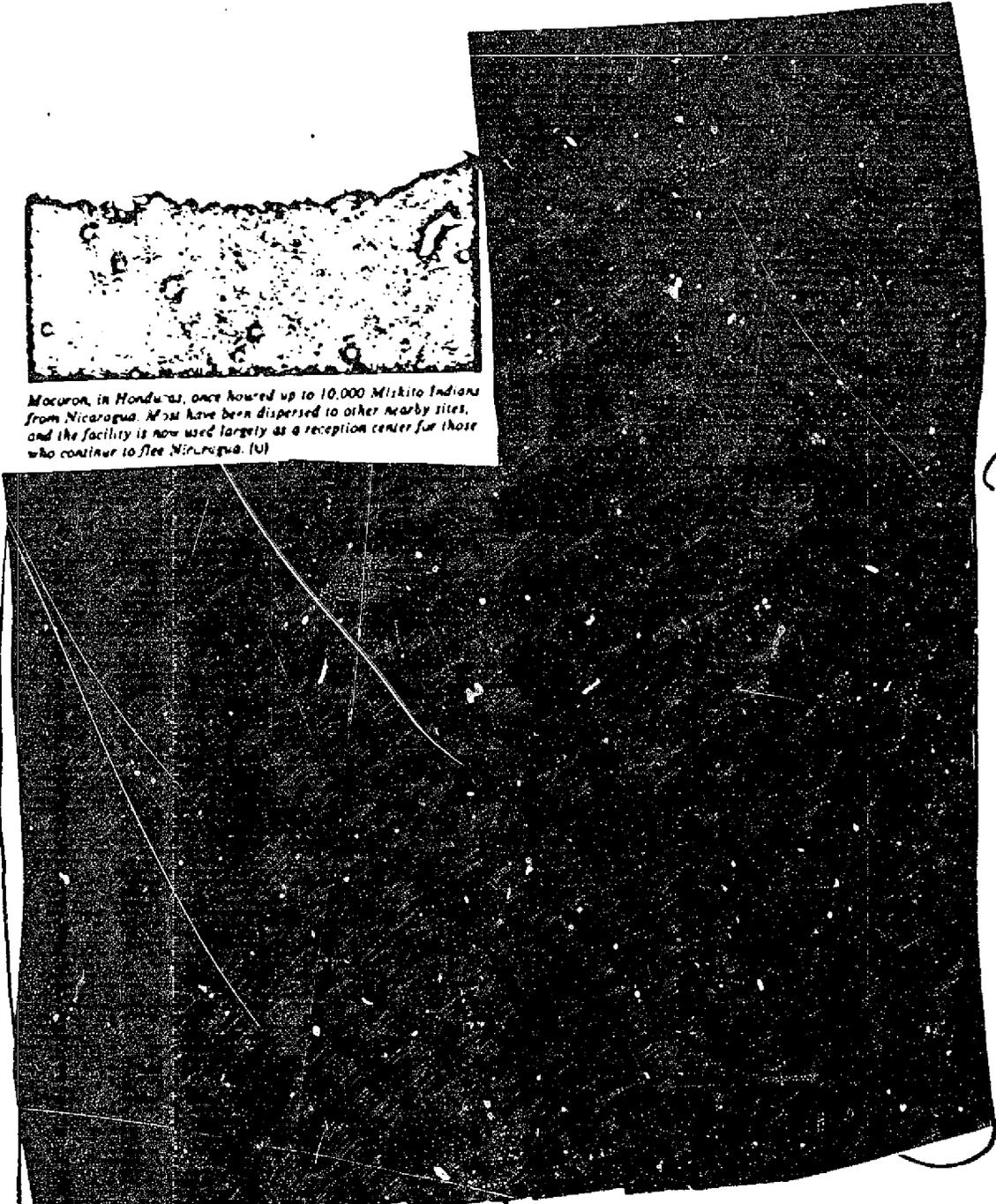
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*Macaron, in Honduras, once housed up to 10,000 Miskito Indians from Nicaragua. Most have been dispersed to other nearby sites, and the facility is now used largely as a reception center for those who continue to flee Nicaragua. (U)*



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Nicaragua. Nicaragua hosts some 17,500 refugees from other Central American countries, mostly Salvadorans. In 1980 the first refugees came directly on ferries across the Golfo de Fonseca, but starting in 1981 most refugees have traveled overland through Honduras. The Salvadoran refugee situation has remained relatively stable in Nicaragua during the past year, with a small outflow matching an equally minor inflow. Because Nicaragua integrates refugees quickly into the general population, only one small refugee camp and processing center remain. Near Leon, it housed some 450 Salvadorans in 1983. About 3,000 Salvadoran refugees are receiving assistance from the UNHCR. The only other significant group of refugees in Nicaragua are approximately 500 Guatemalans, of whom about 100 are receiving aid from the UNHCR. (U)

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## Appendix B

The general economic picture in Central America has been bleak for the past five years. Large foreign debts, coupled with declining production and deteriorating terms of trade, have caused severe balance-of-

payments problems. Economic activity within the region has declined nearly 20 percent, and unemployment has risen to unusually high levels. See the table.

### Central American Economics, 1983

	Population (millions)	Population Growth (percent)	Change in GDP (percent)	Per Capita Change in GDP (percent)	Unemploy- ment (percent)	Balance of Payments (million US \$)	Public Foreign Debt (billion US \$)
Guatemala	7.9	2.9	-2.0	-4.9	20	-283	1.4
El Salvador	5.1	2.6	-1.0	-3.6	30	-130	1.4
Honduras	4.1	3.5	-0.7	-4.2	25	-168	1.9
Nicaragua	3.0	3.6	-2.0	-5.6	20	-645	3.8
Costa Rica	2.4	2.5	0.8	-1.7	10	-342	3.5

This appendix is Unclassified.

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