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Comments [REDACTED]

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

December 18, 1961:

A. Evaluation of President's trip including comments on propaganda impact: Visit [REDACTED] was outstanding success. It bolstered prestige of United States in Venezuela and in Americas especially Caribbean area. It strengthened constitutional government headed by Betancourt, improved prestige of Armed Forces, and if anything, strengthened the unity of Armed Forces which was serious test of their loyalty to constitutional government. Government could not have provided security without backing of Armed Forces. It was decisive victory over Communist extremists and other leftist groups including Union Republicana Democratica (URD) and probably weakened URD position. It will take long time recover, if they ever do, the status they enjoyed as legitimate opposition party. It was severe blow to small segment of Castroites particularly Communist student leaders and so-called intellectuals. Propaganda effort was very successful, well-organized and timing propaganda was well thought out. Public support by Catholic Church of Kennedy visit was very significant factor in removing doubts and fears of people and this together with terrific amounts of effective propaganda accounted

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for large turnout of people and their enthusiastic reception Presidential party. One of highlights of visit was voluntary cooperation of private Venezuelan groups in all segments of life in developing programs to insure success of visit. American groups in Venezuela should also be praised for their collaboration with these groups.

B. Influence Venezuelan political situation: Visit definitely strengthened position of constitutional government headed by Betancourt as well as his Accion Democratica (AD) political party. It was serious defeat for Communist extremists and URD. Trip was very helpful to AD party in interior of country which is party stronghold and which was responsible for Betancourt's election as President. Visit was also an endorsement of government alliance with the United States and raised Venezuela to new high level as influential leader Inter-American system. There is general agreement that responsibility of Venezuelan government is now to expand on success of visit and to give greater impetus to alliance for progress program.

C. Effectiveness of handling by Venezuelan authorities: The leadership and coordination all elements Venezuelan government could

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hardly have been more effective. Special credit is due civilian authorities and even more so to military.

D. Suggestions for other Latin American visits: Venezuelan visit showed importance of keeping down size Presidential parties thereby making it easier for host government and our diplomatic missions to take care of them most efficiently. Timing of 24 to 36 hours is good and should not go beyond that. As condition to visit by President to Latin American countries, as so well illustrated in case of Venezuela, the trip should not be made unless there is very sincere invitation and genuine interest shown on part of host government, and the initiative for invitation should come from host government rather than any suggestion by United States Government.

E. Other comments: The most important result of visit will be measured in terms of respective governments in implementing alliance for progress program in Venezuela which by reason of President's visit is now showcase for this program in Latin America.

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