

ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY IN BOLIVIA

Guerrilla activity in Bolivia's Santa Cruz Department and unrest among tin miners continue to plague President Victor Paz Estenssoro.

The armed forces have taken over the counterinsurgency effort in the troubled San Ignacio-San Simon region of Santa Cruz Department from the national police. Police units failed to wipe out the guerrillas in early August, encountered two ambushes, and created additional antigovernment sentiment by pillaging. Army commanders are optimistic about crushing the dissidents, but the efficiency and competent leadership of the guerrilla band suggest the campaign may be a long one.

[REDACTED] subversive groups are also operating in other parts of Santa Cruz Department.

[REDACTED] they are associated with former vice president Juan Lechin's National Leftist Revolutionary Party (PRIN) and the rightist Bolivian Socialist Falange (FSB).

[REDACTED] Gulf Oil Company [REDACTED] property and personnel in Santa Cruz have been threatened by dissidents claiming to be FSB guerrillas.

Antigovernment demonstrations and violence erupted in the mine areas last week in protest against the beating of Lechin by Paz' political police. Communist and Falangist mine union leaders again called for armed insurrection, and demanded a popular government headed by Lechin. Some 2,500 militants turned out for an antigovernment demonstration in La Paz on 13 August--the largest number opposition leaders have been able to muster for some time.

Paz is also having his troubles within the party and government. Pro-Paz forces won by only a very narrow margin in the 4 August election of officers for Congress against a surprising degree of united opposition.

Party leaders, opposed to a break with Cuba, managed to maneuver Paz into a difficult position regarding timing of the formal announcement. Paz' implication in the Lechin beating and the attempted assassination of Vice President Barrientos on 14 August--the fifth attempt within a year--has created public resentment against Paz and other government officials. Barrientos feels that unless the lawlessness is quickly stopped, it could grow into a serious situation.

Approved for Release
Date

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21 Aug 64

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