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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

THE SITUATION IN BOLIVIA

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Current Intelligence

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
5 November 1964

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Bolivia*

1. At the moment, no effective government has been established in Bolivia, although rebel radiobroadcasts continually refer to a military junta. General Alfredo Ovando Candia, the commander in chief of the Bolivian armed forces, supposedly heads the "junta." Brigadier General Hugo Suarez Guzman, commanding general of the Bolivian Army, has announced that he will be a member of the "junta," but his status is unclear. Vice President Rene Barrientos, the leading figure in the military overthrow of Paz, was scheduled to arrive in La Paz this morning to confer with Ovando regarding the establishment of a government. Barrientos [REDACTED] will not be a member of the military junta. He plans to be a candidate for the presidency when elections are held.

2. The absence of any effective government and the resultant violence and lawlessness provide a new opportunity for elements inimical to US interests, such as Communists and extreme leftists, to exert their influence even on Ovando. Juan Lechin, former vice president and head of the National Leftist Revolutionary Party (PRIN), has already made an attempt to force his inclusion in the junta. So far he appears to have failed, but his attitude can be expected to be important in the

*This memorandum has been coordinated with the Department of State

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considerations of those who will organize an interim government. The growth of Communist influence can be controlled only by the imposition of strong military rule in the initial stages of the new government.

3. The nation's tin miners, who are under Communist and extreme leftist leadership for the most part, are also a force to be reckoned with. The mine leaders announced yesterday that they will fight the army if necessary unless permitted an important role in the government.

4. General Ovando is a capable, intelligent person who is highly regarded by his fellow officers. He leans toward the right politically and is very favorably disposed toward the US. His main disadvantage is his lack of widespread popular support. For this reason, the participation of Barrientos in an interim government or at least his open support of it is desirable. While Barrientos has had dealings with leftist elements, there is no evidence that these persons have significant influence on him. His lack of political sophistication, however, makes him vulnerable to exploitation by opportunistic politicians, including those of the extreme left.

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