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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

*Urban Terrorism in Latin America*

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
6 November 1969

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Urban Terrorism in Latin America

Introduction

A recent upsurge of urban terrorism may pre-  
sage a whole new stage of revolutionary activity in  
Latin America. Revolutionaries and reformers of  
all types are now becoming increasingly aware that  
the key to political power lies not in the country-  
side, where insurgency has thus far failed, but in  
the cities. Their activities, which range from  
outright terrorism to nonviolent demonstrations,  
tend to disrupt order rather than seriously threaten  
any government at the present time.

A background section (paragraphs 1-3) is fol-  
lowed by sections on Brazil (paragraphs 4-7), Uru-  
guay (paragraphs 8-11), Argentina (paragraphs 12-14),  
Colombia (paragraph 16), Venezuela (paragraphs 17-18),  
Guatemala (paragraphs 19-21), and the Dominican Re-  
public (paragraphs 22-23). Conclusions are presented  
in paragraph 24.



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Background

1. The change of emphasis from rural guerrilla activity to urban terrorism in Latin America may be the result of the failure of rural insurgents to attract much support from peasants or from the local pro-Soviet Communist Parties. In addition, many of the hard-core professional guerrillas, including "Che" Guevara, have been killed, imprisoned, or exiled. Many others have simply become disillusioned with the personal hardships involved in conducting rural guerrilla operations.

2. The majority of the urban-based terrorist organizations are pro-Castro, although there are several pro-Peking Communist parties involved, which apparently are operating without assistance from China. There is little evidence thus far that Cuban support for terrorists has amounted to more than training and propaganda; there is no evidence of Cuban and Chinese cooperation in aiding terrorists. Moreover, it appears that Castro's preoccupation with next year's sugar harvest, his pessimism toward the abetment of rural guerrillas following Guevara's death, and his apparent agreement with the Soviet Union to cooperate with the "via pacifica" policy of the pro-Moscow Latin American Communist Parties, have curtailed the amount of funds available at the present time for active and would-be Latin guerrillas.

3. Because of the lack of funds, many professional guerrillas are being drawn into the cities, where money and arms can generally be fairly easily obtained through petty holdups, racketeering, and bank robberies. They have been joined, in an "odd-couple" relationship, by "nonprofessional" agitators from among the ranks of workers and students. Some of these are convinced that they cannot secure change through normal political processes; others are simply interested in generating unrest and in gaining publicity rather than in promoting revolution. The mutual antiestablishment bias of all of them, however, makes them allies of a sort and probably accounts for the growing number of loosely coordinated or completely uncoordinated terrorist incidents committed for one cause or another. An additional complication, of course, is the high level of strictly criminal activity that is present in every city.

Urban Terrorism in Brazil

4. Brazil, the country most affected at the moment, has seen urban terrorist activities by a number of subversive groups grow into an important problem for the government. During the past 18 months, the rise in the level of terrorism has been most marked in Sao Paulo (more than 30 bank robberies have been committed since 1 January), but is also evident in Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, and other major urban centers. The targets of the terrorists have included banks, armored cars, stores that sell guns, public buildings, military posts, and Brazilian and US government personnel. The US Ambassador to Brazil was kidnaped on 4 September and held for the ransom of 15 leftist extremist political prisoners, many of whom had been involved in urban violence. Most of this group have gone on to Cuba and may try to return to Brazil at some future date.



Brazilian Generals Examining Terrorist Damage

5. The subversive groups responsible for the terrorist activities include individuals with widely varying backgrounds. Students probably represent the largest single element, but manual laborers,

professional persons, cashiered military men, and professional guerrillas are also present. The groups use many different names in order to confuse security officials and to create the impression that they are more numerous than is actually the case. Probably the most effective organization was led by dissident Communist Carlos Marighella, who was killed by Brazilian police on 4 November. Marighella's group, sometimes bearing the name National Liberation Action (ANL), from the outset devoted more attention to urban areas than the usual pro-Castro organization. Some of Marighella's followers received guerrilla training in Cuba, but although Havana offered Marighella arms and financial assistance, he apparently did not want to commit his organization to outside influence or direction. His death is a severe blow to Brazilian terrorists who might now possibly attempt some spectacular action both as a reprisal and as a bid to restore badly damaged morale. Several key Marighella lieutenants are still at large.



Dissident Brazilian Communist Leader  
Carlos Marighella

6. Another important group is the Armed Revolutionary Vanguard-Palmares (VAR), in which renegade army captain Carlos Lamarca is the best-known figure. This organization probably was responsible for the assassination of US Army Captain Charles Chandler in Sao Paulo in October 1968. Both the ANL and the VAR have links to terrorist groups that are dominated by students, including the "red-wing" sector of the Peking-line Communist Party of Brazil (CPB), the Revolutionary Brazilian Communist Party (PCBR), and the MR-8, which was named after the date of Che Guevara's capture on 8 October 1967. (He died on 9 October.) The ANL and the MR-8 jointly claimed responsibility for the kidnaping of US Ambassador Elbrick. One of the key figures in the planning

and execution of the kidnaping was Marighella's chief lieutenant, Joaquin Camara Ferreira.

7. Almost all of the terrorist groups have a loose cellular structure, which ensures that the capture of some members does not compromise the entire organization. In August, for example, police reportedly broke up the headquarters of the MR-8 and the MR-26 (named after Fidel Castro's 26 July Movement), but the terrorists were able to regroup with little difficulty. A joint operation by all the civilian and military security agencies in Sao Paulo recently resulted in the acquisition of substantial new information from arrested subversives. The degree of involvement of Marighella's supporters in Sao Paulo terrorism is becoming increasingly evident from these interrogations. Marighella was planning to expand the terrorism campaign to other urban areas, such as Brasilia, and to initiate a campaign of rural terrorism against selected targets in the northeast.

#### Uruguay's Urban Terrorists

8. In Uruguay, the National Liberation Movement (MLN), (commonly referred to as the Tupamaros after the Inca resistance leader, Tupac Amaru), is the main terrorist group. It is a clandestine Marxist-Leninist organization that espouses the violent overthrow of the government and the creation of a "socialist" state. It was founded during the period 1962-1965, and is made up largely of members of the ex-Socialist Party who have lost faith in the parliamentary system. The MLN prides itself on independence and avoids the development of systematic relationships with other Uruguayan leftists, foreign revolutionary movements, or foreign governments. A few Tupamaros have traveled to Cuba for training, however; and a certain amount of liaison with, and possibly assistance from, like-minded groups in Brazil and Argentina reportedly exists.

9. The Tupamaros enjoy considerable support among the country's more militant university and secondary students. The number of regular members may be as high as 200, but as a result of successful police action during the summer and fall, approximately 100 are now in jail. On the other hand,

the close compartmentation of the organization, which has in effect separated the MLN into many little sections, has made police operations against it difficult. The Tupamaros have also shown that they are capable of committing a wide range of subversive acts. Moreover, by the careful selection of terrorist targets and such acts of benevolence as the distribution of stolen meat at Christmas in the workmen's section of Montevideo, they have had some success in portraying themselves as the Robin Hoods of Uruguay.

10. On 8 October, when they attempted a multi-bank robbery and a raid on police headquarters near Montevideo, the Tupamaros suffered their most serious setback to date. During the ensuing gun battle with a combined force of about 200 troops and police, three Tupamaros were killed and approximately 20 were arrested. The rest of the band escaped leaving leaflets saying that Che Guevara's death was not in vain. Continuing investigations and interrogations since the clash on 8 October have resulted in several more arrests and the discovery of an arms cache in the capital. Despite the cost of their abortive attack, the Tupamaros still enjoy the open support of the country's university students and at least the radical faction of the Communist-controlled National Conventions of Workers.

11. Although there is no evidence of collusion, the Tupamaros' activities are undoubtedly applauded by the antiestablishment, antigovernment, pro-Soviet Communist National Convention of Workers (CNT) that has staged strikes and demonstrations threatening the government's

stability. The CNT is helped in turn by the extreme leftist University Students' Federation (FEUU).

Argentine Terrorists

12. The Argentine Communist Party National Committee of Revolutionary Recovery (PCA/CNRR), has been an exponent of urban terrorism since its formation in 1968. It was founded by the pro-Soviet Federation of Communist Youth which was expelled from the Communist Party in 1967 after a disagreement over armed struggle. The federation changed its name to the Argentine Communist Revolutionary Party (PCRA) early this year. This group is only one of several independent organizations that have recently emerged as an extreme left-wing opposition force. Another new group is the Movement of the Argentine Revolutionary Left (MIRA). MIRA is reported to have links with Cuba and China and with extremist Catholic groups generally operating outside of the Church such as the Camilo Torres Command, as well as the revolutionary priests belonging to the "Third World Movement." Reportedly, it also has some contacts with the Uruguayan Tupamaros, and some individual Uruguayans may have taken part in terrorist attacks last April.

13. The recent spate of bombing incidents against US firms in Cordoba and Tucuman, against precincts of the federal police and gendarmerie in Cordoba, and against the USIS Library in Buenos Aires, appear to be the work of an extremely small group of left-wing extremists, probably numbering no more than 200 in the country but with apparently top-level national coordination. The terrorists are believed to be organized into small cells of 5 to 6 persons and spring from such extremist groups as the Trotskyite Labor Party (PRT), the pro-Chinese Communist Vanguard Party (PCV), and the dissident Communist Revolutionary Party (PCRA). Their purpose is to engender an atmosphere of "prerevolutionary instability." While the targets of the bombings were almost exclusively American, the campaign is not per se anti-American, but merely reflects the fact that attacks on US installations more readily engender publicity.

14. As in Brazil and Uruguay, so-called "legitimate" demands by students and workers are being exploited by the Argentine terrorists who are portraying themselves as allied anti-establishment forces. During the week of 6-10 October, for example, 22 bombs were detonated against US business establishments and government buildings throughout the country. These attacks simultaneously marked the student celebration of the second anniversary of the death of Che Guevara, who was born in Argentina, and demonstrated leftist opposition to the government's economic policies.

Urban Terrorism in Other Countries

15. Urban guerrilla activity has also taken place in Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic. In Bolivia, remnants of the National Liberation Army, the Organization formed by Che Guevara, have been threatening to renew guerrilla operations, concentrating this time on urban terrorism. So far, however, their operations have been confined to sporadic bombings and assassination attempts. Many of the terrorists were rounded up when Inti Paredo, their leader, was killed last month.

16. Guerrilla activities in Colombia are still concentrated for the most part in the countryside, but since mid-summer there have been several outbreaks of violence in Medellin, the country's second largest city. Colombian security forces have traced the perpetrators to a group attempting to reorganize the country's sagging rural guerrilla forces.

17. In Venezuela, the main guerrilla groups---the Armed Forces for National Liberation (FALN) and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR)--have indicated that they intend to concentrate on urban terrorist operations rather than rely strictly on rural guerrilla activity. There have been several outbreaks of violence in the cities this year, especially at the time of the proposed visit of Governor Rockefeller in early June and when President Caldera was inaugurated in March. The Rockefeller episode culminated in the largest bank robbery in

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Venezuelan history, in Puerto La Cruz in late June. The robbers scribbled anti-Rockefeller slogans on the bank's walls, thus symbolizing some sort of unity with students in other cities who had rioted against the visit.

18. Coupled with renewed activity in the rural areas are frequent reports of terrorists' plans for the cities. Primary targets are the offices of US-owned companies such as the Rockefeller interests, Sears outlets, and US oil company installations. Periodic threats against US representatives, including members of the embassy and consular staffs, are received. The recent armed robbery of a US consul and his family in Caracas, however, does not appear to have been politically motivated. Nevertheless, rumors persist that some form of urban terrorism is to start soon.

19. Terrorism including many incidents in Guatemala City has almost become a way of life in Guatemala. US Ambassador Mein and two US military advisers were assassinated last year, and reported terrorist incidents--including bombings, shootings, kidnappings, and assassinations--have continued over the year at a rate of 20 to 50 a month. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Communist terrorist groups plan to recapture international attention to Guatemalan insurgency by assassinating important local political figures and the US Ambassador or other members of the US mission. At least two members of the embassy have received threats on their lives.

20. Although violence has continued at a "normal" level around the country, Guatemalan terrorists have concentrated for about a year on organization, structuring supply networks, and financing. Thus, many terrorist incidents appear to be opportunistic actions rather than planned operations. Planned kidnappings appear to have netted the groups several hundred thousand dollars, however.

21. There are several indications that the Communists may soon try to mount an all-out terrorist campaign, possibly to coincide with the

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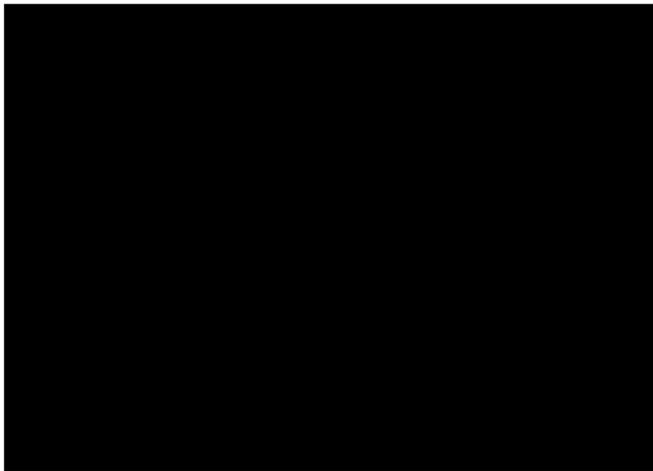
opening in November of the presidential political campaigns. During October there were several political murders in various parts of the country directed against military officers and labor leaders.

22. In the Dominican Republic, the intermittent urban terrorism that has plagued the Balaguer administration throughout its three and one-half years of rule seems likely to continue. Although violence has always been an integral part of the country's political scene, urban terrorism has become more institutionalized in recent years, partly because of the bitter heritage of the 1965 rebellion and the innumerable "scores" left unsettled. The few attempts by the Dominican Communists to establish a rural base have been dismal failures, and terrorism, like the country's political life, is likely to remain centered almost solely in the capital of Santo Domingo.

23. Urban terrorism has been increasing over the last six months, undoubtedly reflecting the approach of the May 1970, presidential election which is likely to be the occasion for a significant rise in terrorist activity. Some Communist groups have used robberies to raise funds and assassinations to enforce political intimidation and garner publicity. Members of political parties on both the left and right are not above lending at least their tacit support to an urban campaign aimed at unseating the Balaguer administration. In any such campaign, US installations or personnel could provide tempting targets for publicity-seeking "nationalistic" terrorists, owing to the past history of US "intervention" in Dominican affairs.

#### Conclusions

24. Urban terrorism is likely to increase in the future. Guerrillas need money to operate, and it is readily available to them in the cities. Non-professional agitators (students and workers) have learned that they can gain quick and spectacular results from easily publicized urban terrorist acts of violent demonstrations, especially those aimed at the US. Extremist student groups now view the "university struggle" (universities in Latin America



are located in the cities) as a possible starting point for a general urban struggle. The official Communist parties realize the potential of urban trade union and student disturbances and are attempting to unite the two factions. Such cooperation in creating urban disturbances may bring about a closer working relationship between pro-Castro and pro-Moscow Communists, who have already been forced to participate to some extent in extremist activities in order to bring them under control. Moreover, it is likely that Fidel Castro will remain determined to aid revolutionary movements in Latin America, wherever it is economically possible and politically feasible for him to do so.

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