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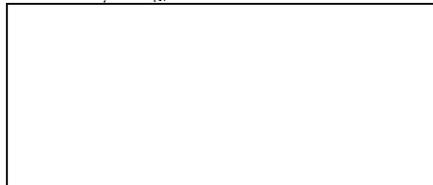
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29 November 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Special Group (CI) Assistants

SUBJECT: Venezuela

There is attached a memorandum prepared by CIA entitled "The Application of Intelligence to the Venezuelan Insurgency Situation". It is planned to supplement this material with a brief oral statement at the 2 December 1965 meeting of the Special Group, describing significant recent developments affecting the Venezuelan counterinsurgency situation.



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APPROVED FOR RELEASE

DATE: AUG 2007

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SUBJECT: The Application of Intelligence to the Venezuelan Insurgency Situation

The effective prosecution of the counterinsurgency program in Venezuelan demonstrates the effectiveness of energetic and judicious use of intelligence in dealing with insurgency in its initial stages. Although the insurgency problem in Venezuela is not resolved, the insurgency is contained and controlled. By 1963 the insurgent situation had passed its incipient stage, guerrilla cadres and units had already been formed and trained in Cuba and were supported by a well established communist party in Venezuela. However, it was not until mid-1965 that the Government of Venezuela finally acted with firmness and determination to resolve the insurgency problem.

In September 1965 the Venezuelan Government began an intensive and sustained campaign to eliminate the threat to its stability posed by the armed actions of the communist controlled Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN). Numbering approximately 1800, the FALN had, since its organization in 1962, developed guerrilla fronts in the remote mountain regions of the east and west and built up urban brigades capable of carrying out extensive acts of terrorism in the cities.

The high point of FALN activities in the cities was reached in 1963. All forms of terrorism were employed in an effort to bring about a quick overthrow of the government and the year was climaxed by an all-out campaign to prevent the 1963 presidential elections. Stores and warehouses

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owned by U. S. firms were targets for arson by FALN activists. Oil installations were bombed and sabotaged. Restaurants were bombed as were theaters. Officers of the Caracas police force and the political police (DIGEPOL) were the victims of assassinations. Constantly seeking publicity, the terrorists kidnapped prominent personalities, including a lieutenant colonel in the U. S. Army Mission in the fall of 1963 and a colonel in the U. S. Air Force Mission in October 1964. The FALN's campaign failed however and its leadership was forced to shift tactics and emphasis to the strategy of victory through a "prolonged struggle" utilizing guerrilla warfare. Beginning in mid-1964 the FALN strengthened its guerrilla forces in the rural areas from 200 to approximately 600. As of late July 1965 guerrillas had tied down a large number of Venezuelan army forces.

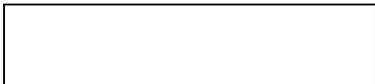
Throughout its development the FALN was favored by the government's unwillingness to take strong action against insurgency or even to admit publicly the existence of an insurgency threat. This reluctance to take action, which was based primarily upon political considerations, continued even though foreign support of the insurgents was evident. A cache of arms destined for the guerrillas and shipped directly from Cuba was discovered by Venezuelan authorities in late 1963. An estimated 200 young Venezuelans received guerrilla warfare training in Cuba from 1960 to 1963. Two couriers were arrested in March and April 1965 and nearly \$400,000 marked for the communist party was confiscated.

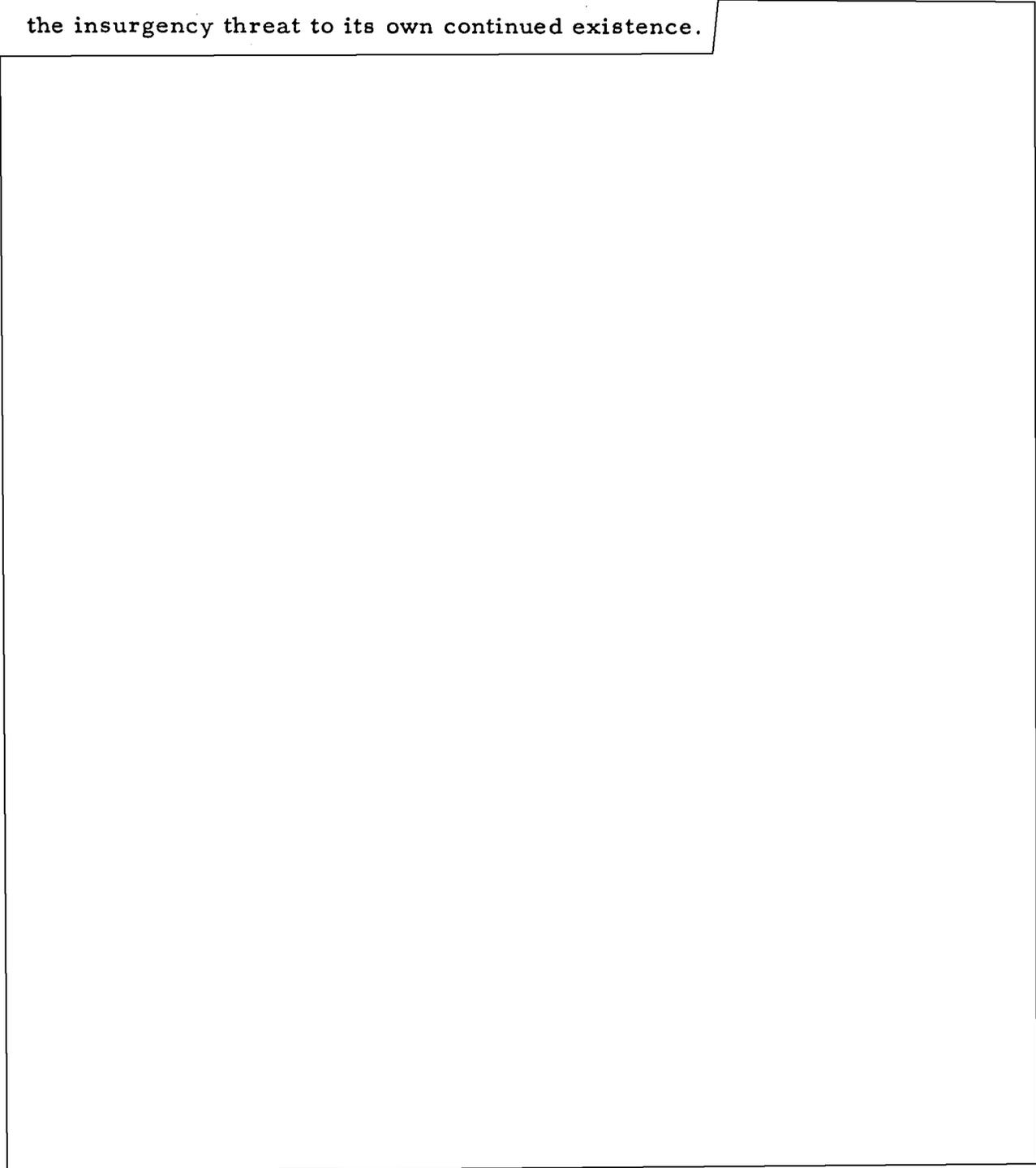
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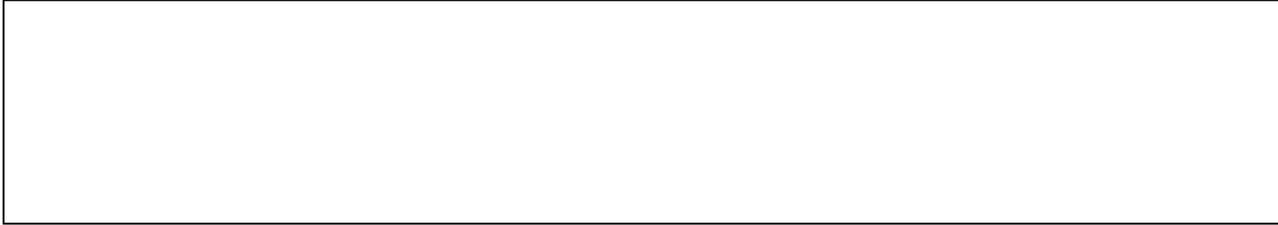
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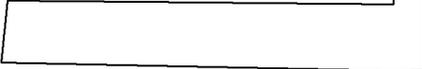
 Venezuela was thus confronted with the problem of a government which refused to recognize the seriousness of the insurgency threat to its own continued existence.

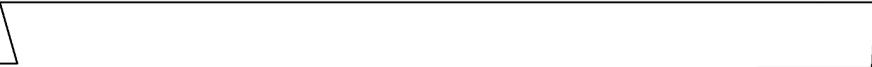


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By the summer of 1965 many Venezuelan Government officials were finally becoming convinced that the insurgents were not going to disappear and insurgency in the rural areas was not losing force. In late August, armed with intelligence   documenting the threat posed by the FALN, the Director General of the Ministry of Interior briefed President Leoni and received his concurrence to launch a prolonged and sustained campaign against the insurgents.

This campaign got underway in early September 1965 and continues to gain momentum. 

 High points of the counterinsurgency drive include the arrest of the FALN's national commander followed almost immediately by the location and capture of his successor. Other prominent insurgent leaders imprisoned include the chief of the FALN's forces in the capital and the commander of the "Fourth of May" guerrilla detachment located in eastern Venezuela. Installations of the FALN were raided and large quantities of arms, communication equipment, and other logistical supplies confiscated.

One of the spectacular finds was the discovery and seizure in late October of an elaborate clandestine arms factory and training center located

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20 miles from Caracas. Housed in subterranean tunnels behind electrically operated steel doors were large stocks of arms, munitions, explosives, and sophisticated arms manufacturing machinery. An elaborate concrete-encased subterranean FALN radio communications center near El Tigre in Eastern Venezuela was seized in early October. Police operations against the guerrillas have resulted in the capture recently of more than 100 insurgents in the eastern mountains of Venezuela.

While the FALN is far from eliminated and still has a capability to conduct guerrilla warfare and urban terrorism, the government's campaign has been successful in sharply reducing the effectiveness of the insurgents. Government successes have seriously dampened the morale among the leaders as well as the rank and file members. In addition, the counterinsurgency effort and the failure of the communist strategy of "armed struggle" has further widened the gap between the hard and soft line members of the party. This has prevented unified party action which would be essential to success.

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