

# **EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT** **ROUTING SLIP**

TO:

|    |           | ACTION | INFO | DATE | INITIAL |
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| 1  | DCI       |        |      |      |         |
| 2  | DDCI      |        |      |      |         |
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| 4  | D/ICS     |        |      |      |         |
| 5  | DDI       |        |      |      |         |
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| 8  | DDS&T     |        |      |      |         |
| 9  | Chm/NIC   |        |      |      |         |
| 10 | GC        |        |      |      |         |
| 11 | IG        |        |      |      |         |
| 12 | Compt     |        |      |      |         |
| 13 | D/EEO     |        |      |      |         |
| 14 | D/Pers    |        |      |      |         |
| 15 | D/OLL     |        |      |      |         |
| 16 | C/PAO     |        |      |      |         |
| 17 | SA/IA     |        |      |      |         |
| 18 | AO/DCI    |        |      |      |         |
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| 21 | ES        |        | X    |      |         |
| 22 |           |        |      |      |         |

SUSPENSE 1100, 2 December  
Date

Remarks:

Any comments to me please NLT  
1100 hours, 2 December.

*[Signature]*  
Executive Secretary

1 December 1983

Date

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DCI  
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REG

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20508

Via LDX *ER file*

November 30, 1983

83-4385/1

MEMORANDUM FOR CHARLES HILL  
Executive Secretary  
Department of State

COL. JOHN STANFORD  
Executive Secretary  
Department of Defense

ROGER CLEGG  
Special Assistant to the  
Attorney General  
Department of Justice

THOMAS CORMACK  
Executive Secretary  
Central Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT: White House Digest Paper re Central America:  
The Refugee Crisis

We are forwarding a revised edition of subject document. Your approval or comments are requested by 12:00 noon, Friday, December 2, 1983.

*Robert M. Kimmitt*  
Robert M. Kimmitt  
Executive Secretary

Attachment

*passed to Thomas Shull,  
D/ES, NSC that we have  
no corrections from purely  
an intelligence point of view but  
as is our understanding <sup>w/NSC</sup> we do not  
approve/endorse paper JSC 12/1/83*

8595

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

Via LDX

November 30, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR CHARLES HILL  
Executive Secretary  
Department of State

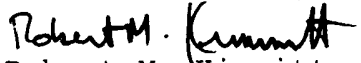
COL. JOHN STANFORD  
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CENTRAL AMERICA: THE REFUGEE CRISIS

America is not an ordinary country. Our love of freedom and generous appreciation of diverse cultural values, our dedication to an open exchange of ideas -- these things we share in many different forms with other democracies, but America's openness to immigrants and, in particular, to refugees has contributed significantly to the richness of our national life. Refugees hold a special place in our sense of who we are and what we stand for as a nation. Their contributions fill the pages of our history books; yet for every refugee who finds his way to safety and a new life with us, thousands of others know only bitterness or even death.

-2-

Since 1945 perhaps 20 million persons have emigrated, fled or been expelled from Communist controlled countries. Although 2½ million have settled in the U.S., less fortunate refugees have remained homeless for years. To the tortuous history of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, we add new names from our own hemisphere. Today it is Cuba and Nicaragua, tomorrow other countries in Central America may appear on the list as a new refugee crisis develops. The outcome depends upon our actions. The postwar record demonstrates that the coming to power of a Communist regime always inevitably creates a large scale exodus and frequently a continuing flow of refugees. The ultimate destination for many of these victims has been the United States.

#### FROM CENTRAL AMERICA

Today, the 25 million people of Central America and Panama face the same threat. Should Central America fall to Communism, experience indicates that a flood of sudden emigrants would pour out of the region. The best estimates indicate that at least 1.5 million and probably 2.5 million people would flee.1/

We can avert this tragedy by helping our neighbors resist the current Soviet-Cuban assault. As Ambassador H. Eugene Douglas, the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, has said:

"If we truly care about the people of Central America, then we must not allow them to be forced onto the refugee trail... Democracy allows many options: the option to vote for or against the government; the option to stay or to leave. Communism offers only one option -- to flee. But if the free world allows any country to be forced so far along the Communist path that millions of its people feel they have no choice but to flee, then we have already failed. No provisions, no matter how compassionate, that may be made for the refugees, can make up for that failure."2/

-3-

WHY SO MANY ?

All estimates of future refugee flows are subject to debate. Experts disagree even on the numbers of existing refugees. Refugees, after all, flee out of chaos, many secretly, many fearing for their lives, to strange countries where they encounter overwhelmed bureaucracies and confusing linguistic and cultural barriers. And the Communist countries from which refugees flee are often unwilling to give reliable estimates of the number of refugees who have fled. Finally, many die during flight.

But experience does give us some guide to what to expect should Central America fall.

Since 1959, 1,250,000 Cubans, more than 12 percent of the island's population, have fled Cuba's Communist regime. Nearly 85 percent have come to the United States. That high percentage is partly due to Cuba's proximity to this country. Because the United States is prosperous and free it is the most popular destination for those fleeing Communism, so the exodus from Communist governments can be expected to be higher when those governments are nearby.

Because Central America is not much farther and, unlike Cuba, is connected to the United States by land, we could expect a similar percentage of Central Americans to leave their homelands. With 25 million people living in the region, a 10 percent exodus -- slightly less than that out of Cuba -- would yield 2.5 million people. A rock bottom estimate of five percent would yield 1.25 million. These numbers do not include the Caribbean island nations, which may also be vulnerable.

-4-

OUT OF NICARAGUA

Events in Nicaragua, now run by a Communist clique, suggest that the five to 10 percent range is a good guess. By most estimates, up to 100,000 people, 3.4 percent of that country's population, have fled since the beginning of the fighting that concluded with the Sandinista takeover. An estimated 60,000 of those Nicaraguans have come to the United States.3/

Yet the revolution is only four years old. The Nicaraguan Communists have not yet fully consolidated their power. If 3.4 percent of the population has already fled, it seems clear that the Nicaraguan exodus will exceed five percent and likely that it will approach or surpass 10 percent.

Edgard Macias, who was once the Vice Minister of Labor for the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, but who resigned and fled the country when the Sandinistas revealed their totalitarian intentions, has commented on this mass emigration:

"The FSLN [the Sandinista regime] with its totalitarian oppression and communist model has produced in only four years more expatriated persons (refugees, exiles, and emigrants etc.) than the Somoza regime did in 45 years [though the Somoza regime was] a terrible regime that must never return to power in Nicaragua."4/

THE REAL VICTIMS

The prime victims of a mass exodus from Central America would be the refugees. They would lose their homes, their livelihoods, their native languages and cultures, their friends, perhaps their families. Journeying in poor conditions, many would lose their health, some their lives.

But for all the suffering of the refugees, the potential social and economic impact on this country of such a sudden migration cannot be safely ignored. If the Cuban experience is any guide at least 80 percent of sudden emigrants from Central America would come to this country.

-5-

### COUNTING THE COSTS

In financial terms alone, the strain would be significant. The average refugee costs the federal government more than \$10,000 over his first three years in this country. Federal assistance alone could cost this country more than \$20 billion within a few years should there be a mass migration from Central America. Billions more would be spent in succeeding years, all at a time when the federal deficit is approaching \$200 billion. State and local costs would also be high.

The people who do not emigrate but are left behind in the new Communist state also would suffer severely from the emigration. Not only do Communist countries inevitably subject their people to great economic hardship, the loss through emigration of many of the country's most able people and much of its entrepreneurial class causes additional hardship. Even if the Communist threat is turned back many of those who leave for fear of the Communists will never return.

### THE MARIEL EXPERIENCE

The 125,000 Cubans and the few thousand Haitians who arrived in this country during the great 1980 exodus total barely five percent of the numbers anticipated in the event Central America should fall to Communism.

Yet, federal reimbursements to Florida alone (Florida was the hardest-hit state, though many other states received refugees) for recent sudden immigrants totaled nearly half a billion dollars for fiscal years 1980 through 1983.5/ That doesn't include federal administrative costs, which are considerable.

Nor does that figure include other local expenses such as large sums for special and bilingual education programs,



-6-

criminal enforcement and detention, costs for special medical problems, etc.

Finally, our churches and charitable institutions, as well as tens of thousands of private citizens have spent hundreds of millions of dollars of their own funds to help these people.

Eventually, states and localities receive offsetting benefits from an influx of able, patriotic refugees, even as Miami received new life from the Cuban exodus that started in the '60s. Given time, refugees become taxpayers. For the U.S., the problems come not from the people themselves but from the manner of their arrival -- suddenly, in great numbers, and frequently destitute.

Any mass migration brings chaos, and that chaos brings costs -- costs that are expressed not only in dollars and cents but in significant strains on the social fabric. Even in Miami, which has been accustomed to heavy immigration for more than 20 years, the sudden immigration from the 1980 exodus has certainly, and unfortunately, contributed to social tensions in that city.

Should Central America fall to the Communists, Florida, still reeling from the Cuban-Haitian exodus, would not be able to absorb 2.5 million new sudden immigrants, nor could the other states along our southern border. The immigrants would have to be distributed throughout the country, as would the temporary financial and social burden.

#### THE LADY'S PLEDGE

Of course, the benefits of immigration are more difficult to measure, and over the long run they must be immeasurably greater.

-7-

The Statue of Liberty symbolizes not only hope for the homeless who come here, but also the contributions they make to building America. Every wave of immigrants has brought great gifts to this country. We have reaped enormous dividends from keeping out the welcome mat -- not only economic and cultural dividends, but dividends in patriotism, for it must be admitted that adopted Americans frequently are the best Americans of all.

And Caribbean area immigrants, if most of those who have already come from Castro's Cuba serve as an example, would do particular credit to this country.

But we must distinguish between steady, if strong, streams of immigration, such as those that carried our ancestors to America, and the tragic mass migrations caused by Communist oppression. Such migrations, which inevitably include many who would never have dreamed of leaving their homelands but for the Communists, are intolerably cruel to those who are forced to flee, and dangerously straining to this country.

The American people have always welcomed refugees from Communism. But we can make that refugee stream unnecessary. We can give our Central American neighbors the military aid and training and, even more important, the economic assistance they need to turn back the Communist challenge. There is no excuse for not doing our duty.

NOTES

1. Office of the United States Coordinator for Refugee Affairs: "Briefing Paper and Talking Points on Refugees and Potential Refugees in and from Central America" These estimates, while necessarily speculative, are extrapolations from our experience in this hemisphere i.e., the Cuban exodus which over two decades has involved more than 12 percent of the Cuban population and the Nicaraguan exodus which is already substantial and is growing steadily.

2. Memo to the White House Outreach Working Group on Central America; August, 1983.

3. Op. Cit., "Refugees"

4. Macias, Edgard; Letter to the Editor; WASHINGTON TIMES; August 3, 1983.

5. Memo from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Department of Health and Human Services, to the Outreach Working Group; August 31, 1983.