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Approved For Release 2000/08/23 : CIA-RDP67-00059A000400140012-9

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENTTO : Assistant Director, ORE *DCI*

DATE: 4 August 1949

FROM : Chief, Latin America Branch

SUBJECT: Improvement of Field Reporting of Intelligence *in Emergency Situations*RECOMMENDATION

1. ~~It is recommended that~~ *delivered* *four* *is* the attention of DCI be called to the implications of a 24-hour suspension of official communications from Guatemala City during the recent revolt with a view to steps being taken to prevent a recurrence of a similar situation.

BACKGROUND

2. About noon on 18 July, Colonel Arana, Chief of the Guatemalan Armed Forces, was shot and killed. By evening of the same day fighting broke out in Guatemala City involving the use of small arms, rifles, artillery, tanks, and aircraft. Sporadic revolts and disturbances developed also in the provincial cities. Disorders persisted until about midnight of 19 July. There were over 300 casualties.

3. From 6 p.m. on 18 July until the evening of 19 July practically all reliable channels of communication between Guatemala City and Washington were cut. During this period the US Ambassador was unable to reach his post in Guatemala City; the US Embassy could file only plain telegrams subject to government censorship; SO channels of communication were cut; official and private US cable and telephone traffic between the provinces and Guatemala City and between Guatemala City and the US were inoperative for intelligence purposes; radio broadcasts emanating from Guatemala City were subject to government censorship; and the condition of the country's highways, airports, and railroads made it impossible for US personnel within the country to cross the frontier and report on events. It is true that during this period CINCARIB, alerted with respect to the situation in Guatemala, was able to establish radio contact with the US Air Forces Mission sub-base at La Aurora airport on the outskirts of Guatemala City. Since, however, the fighting at and around the airport made it impossible for the Mission to maintain contact with the US Embassy or other US personnel in the country, or with other parts of Guatemala, little accurate information could be obtained through this channel.

DISCUSSION

4. The 24-hour break in communications meant that Washington was without reliable information on which to base an estimate of the situation from the evening of the 19th until the morning of the 20th. This short interruption may not have been important in the estimation of medium- and long-range factors, such as

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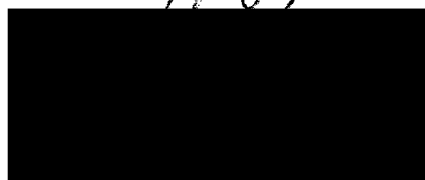
the effect of the revolution on the policy of the Guatemalan Government toward the US. But it was damaging and might have been disastrous in the estimation as to the degree of danger to the 1,900 US citizens in Guatemala and the planning of adequate protection for them.

5. Much of Latin America is presently going through a period of considerable unrest which could reach serious proportions in the event of a worsening economic situation. Civil disorders such as those which occurred recently in Guatemala will probably occur in other of the American republics during the next 12 months.

regarded as
6. It is therefore, in our view, a matter of the highest importance that positive action be taken by the appropriate authorities to permit Washington intelligence agencies to maintain contact with field collection sources at all times and to prevent a recurrence of the loss of contact such as occurred during the recent Guatemalan disorders. It is also important that these methods of contact not be interrelated; that is, that they not all be concentrated, for example, in the US Embassy quarters, or in the hands of a limited number of personnel, since the existence of alternate independent channels is of the greatest importance. One possible solution might be the supplying of US missions in the other American republics with emergency radio transmission and receiving equipment independent of local power sources and local operators.

Office It is recommended that
7. This branch believes it important that measures be taken to provide these independent and alternate channels for intelligence reporting at the earliest possible time.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
 OFFICIAL ROUTING SLIP

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| <input type="checkbox"/> ACTION | <input type="checkbox"/> DIRECT REPLY | <input type="checkbox"/> RETURN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COMMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PREPARATION OF REPLY | <input type="checkbox"/> DISPATCH |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CONCURRENCE | <input type="checkbox"/> RECOMMENDATION | <input type="checkbox"/> FILE |

REMARKS: *Suggest a redraft to DCI to include definite recommendation with AP/OSO collaboration*

FD: Please draft for DCI on coordination and send them to SO. Do

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