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SPECIAL  
NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE  
Number 98-67

SECURITY CONDITIONS IN URUGUAY

Submitted by

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Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

As indicated overleaf

23 March 1967

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

23 March 1967

SUBJECT: SMIE 98-67; SECURITY CONDITIONS IN URUGUAY

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the likelihood of incidents which might endanger President Johnson during his visit to Punta del Este or disrupt the Summit Conference (12-14 April).

CONCLUSION

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We believe that the risk to President Johnson during the course of this trip will be slight-- though greater than was the case with his visit to Mexico City a year ago. Uruguayan Communists, other leftists, and perhaps a few exiles will probably succeed in carrying out demonstrations on a considerable scale in Montevideo (some 75 miles from Punta del Este). One or another of these groups may also attempt terrorist acts, but we believe that they will be unable to create a situation of general disorder or to disrupt the conference.

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DISCUSSION

1. The political situation in Uruguay has improved in recent months, as a result of the constitutional reform strengthening the executive branch of the government, but economic and fiscal problems remain severe. Government tax, trade, and welfare policies have inhibited economic growth and contributed to a serious rise in the cost of living (nearly 90 percent in 1965 and about 50 percent in 1966). Uruguayan Communists have used the general dissatisfaction with this state of affairs to solidify their important, and often-times leading, role in the major labor and student organizations.

2. The new Uruguayan Government is well disposed toward the US and is anxious to prevent any untoward developments at the Summit Conference. President Oscar Gestido, a retired air force general, who took office on 1 March, is in a position to carry out executive responsibilities more quickly and effectively than the predecessor government. His administration is still in its shakedown period, however; he has only a slim Congressional majority and some of the representatives of his own Colorado party are antagonistic to him and his above-party approach.

3. Uruguay's tradition of strict adherence to constitutional procedures and protection of the rights of the individual also tends to complicate the government's task in setting up security arrangements. Uruguayan security officials would be reluctant, for example, to use the kind of extra-constitutional methods which Mexican officials used in connection with

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President Johnson's visit to Mexico City in April 1966, such as the detention of potential troublemakers who as yet had committed no overt act. Nor can the Uruguayan Government call on a disciplined official party, as did the Mexicans, to get its members out to line the streets and preempt positions from potentially hostile demonstrators.

4. Organizations of the extreme left enjoy greater freedom of action in Uruguay than in most Latin American countries. The Communist Party (PCU), which is Soviet oriented and has some 15,000-20,000 members, has already undertaken an intensive propaganda campaign against the April Summit Meeting. A major theme, aimed at exploiting traditional Uruguayan sentiment against military intervention, has been condemnation of the US role in Vietnam. The PCU has denounced other visiting Presidents, but has focused its considerable assets among labor unions, student organizations, and other groups in demonstrations against President Johnson.

5. We doubt that the PCU leaders will risk their present favorable position in Uruguay by sanctioning overt acts of violence against President Johnson. In the 1966 national elections the PCU made small but appreciable gains, heading an electoral coalition called FIDEL, which won some six percent of the total vote and elected five members of the Chamber of Deputies and one Senator. This representation provides the party with bargaining power on closely contested issues in the Chamber of Deputies, where the administration's majority is thin indeed. The PCU is also maintaining a

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predominant position in organized labor by providing effective leadership and support for labor on bread and butter issues.

6. There is a danger, however, that demonstrations organized by the PCU could either get out-of-hand or be exploited by smaller but more militant groups of extreme leftists, such as pro-Chinese Communists, Anarchists, Socialists, or Castroites. The greatest danger in Punta del Este is that a few members of the PCU's youth organization (UJC) might attempt violent action on their own. Neither the PCU nor any other group is likely to be able to organize large demonstrations there. The threat posed by the extreme left is substantially greater in Montevideo. Communist strength is concentrated in the capital and fairly large demonstrations probably could be mounted there. If the President should visit Montevideo, students from the National University might attempt to mob his official car.

7. Most other elements of the Uruguayan population are essentially favorable in their attitudes towards the US. Furthermore, the use of violence for political purposes is not typical of Uruguay; as a result Communist-organized demonstrations are not likely to stir up or draw much of the general public. Uruguay is host country, however, for political exiles from many Latin American countries, including Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. One or another of these exile groupings may undertake demonstrations or attempt a terrorist act against a visiting head of state. Finally, we cannot entirely exclude the possibility of an assassination attempt against President Johnson, for example by a psychopath or extremist.

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8. Military and police contingents designed to provide security for the Summit Conference are under the overall control of the regional military commander, General Alfonso González. The police will have primary responsibility for controlling civil disturbances and demonstrations with the military held in mobile reserve. Close coordination and liaison is in effect between the security planning staff and US security specialists. The National Police Force numbers an estimated 15,000 men, 6,000 of whom are normally stationed in Montevideo. Of this number, the Metropolitan Guard (some 400 men) and the Republican Guard (some 400), have riot control capabilities. In addition the National Fire Department has 600 men with a considerable potential for controlling riots. The armed forces include 10,500 men in the Army, 1,875 in the Navy, and 1,360 in the Air Force. In addition, the Maritime Police Force (approximately 500 men) also has some paramilitary potential for riot control. The Metropolitan Guard, the Republican Guard, and the Maritime Police have received riot control training and equipment through US aid programs.

9. Uruguayan police and security officials are already working, in cooperation with US specialists, to ensure adequate precautions in the Punta del Este area. The Uruguayan security forces have had experience in handling numerous Communist-led strikes during the past few years, and have shown themselves to be reasonably effective. In Punta del Este, the government will probably be able to prevent demonstrations; elsewhere, particularly in Montevideo, the security forces probably will try simply to keep them

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orderly. Police officials and the Uruguayan President himself, while showing confidence in the government's ability to take effective precautions for the area in and around Punta del Este, have expressed concern about the risks of a visit by President Johnson to Montevideo.

10. All things considered, we believe that the Uruguayan Government will carry out safeguards adequate to protect President Johnson at Punte del Este, at Carrasco airport (which is some 10 miles outside Montevideo in the direction of Punta del Este), and in traveling from the airport to the conference site. We think that the risk to the President will be slight -- though greater than was the case during his visit to Mexico City. Uruguayan Communists, other leftists, and perhaps a few exiles will probably succeed in carrying out demonstrations on a considerable scale in Montevideo, but we believe they will be unable to create a situation of general disorder or to disrupt the Summit Conference.

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11. We have also been asked to assess Cuban capabilities and intentions to interfere with President Johnson's aircraft on the way to or from Uruguay. Cuba's surface-to-air missile system, which has a range of about 17 miles, has a capability to shoot down aircraft over parts of the island and in certain areas near its periphery. Cuban Mig-19s carrying extra fuel tanks have a maximum range of about 1,000 n.m. (The similar range for the Mig-21s is 850 n.m.) We believe, however, that Fidel Castro would regard such a provocation as suicidal.