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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

24 November 1981

MEMORANDUM

Nicaragua: Prospects for a Refugee Exodus

We do not foresee a large-scale exodus of refugees from Nicaragua to the US in the near future.

The middle class has been the group most affected by mounting economic hardship, government confiscations, and restrictions on political freedoms. Consequently, middle class emigration probably will accelerate in the months ahead. Nonetheless, the middle class represents only a small percentage of Nicaragua's 2.5 million population.

One other group, the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua's East Coast, has been significantly affected by Sandinista repression. Last spring, about 2,000 Miskitos took refuge in Honduras. There is no information to suggest, however, that they will seek to enter the United States.

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country overland rather than by sea, given their nation's long, porous borders with both Honduras and Costa Rica. While some Nicaraguan refugees could reach the United States overland through Mexico, their numbers would be insignificant in comparison to those of illegal immigrants from Mexico itself or even from overpopulated, war-torn El Salvador, whose population is nearly double that of Nicaragua.



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