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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

25 July 1980

MEMORANDUM

Cuba-Nicaragua: Support for Central American Insurgencies [REDACTED]

Summary

Havana is still pushing for unity among the revolutionary groups in Central American countries. At Cuban urging, El Salvador's three largest armed leftist groups announced in mid-June that they had joined with the local Communist Party under a single command structure to be known as the Unified Revolutionary Directorate. As with the similar move last month by Guatemala's insurgent groups, the announcement of unity is apt to represent more hope than reality, at least over the short term. [REDACTED]

The Cubans were also reportedly involved in the arms trafficking that came to light with the crash of a Panamanian-registered airplane in El Salvador on 15 June. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

This memorandum was requested by the National Security Advisor to the President. It responds to specific questions and is not intended to be an analysis of the overall relationship between Cuba-Nicaragua and Central America. It was prepared by the [REDACTED] Office of Political Analysis under the direction of the National Intelligence Officer for Latin America, and coordinated with the Directorate of Operations and the Office of Strategic Research. Information in this memorandum reflects information available through 15 July 1980.

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El Salvador

The Cuban-sponsored push for unity among Central America's revolutionary movements was highlighted by an announcement in mid-June from El Salvador. The country's three largest armed leftist groups--the Farabundo Marti Peoples Liberation Forces (FPL), the Revolutionary Peoples Army (ERP), and the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN)--plus the Communist Party of El Salvador claimed that they had agreed to work together under a single command structure to be called the Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU). Although the new umbrella organization was apparently intended to supersede the Revolutionary Coordinating Board of the Masses (CRB),

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The announcement of the creation of DRU acknowledged Cuba as "the vanguard of the Latin American people in their struggle for social justice, liberty, development, and true national independence." As was the case with the Guatemalan revolutionaries last month, the Salvadoran leftists reportedly agreed to the new unification step.

[REDACTED]

Despite the high-sounding rhetoric of the announcement, the groups involved have had their differences in the past and are not likely to have achieved any real unity overnight. The DRU may, in fact, represent less of a real unifying mechanism than an attempt to avoid any blatantly divisive actions that would further harm the left. The guerrillas have suffered a series of reverses over recent weeks, including the occupation of the National University by the government security forces and the capture of several fairly high-level leftist leaders; rightwing counterviolence also apparently is taking its toll on the left.

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In an attempt to recover some momentum, a student group that may be affiliated with the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR) reportedly is planning a major propaganda effort to develop

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international condemnation of the government's "invasion" of the university. Operating from organizational bases in Cuba and Czechoslovakia, the student group hopes to elicit more active support from democratic as well as Communist countries. [REDACTED]

Plans for a "final offensive" are also said to be going ahead under the aegis of the newly formed revolutionary directorate, which theoretically is responsible for both political and military decisions. The timing of the guerrillas' next push apparently depends largely on the receipt of sufficient arms. Information on arms supplies and sources is fragmentary and difficult to substantiate. The general impression, however, is that arms supplies are short and that deliveries--from whatever source--have been at least temporarily disrupted by recent events. Nevertheless, the revolutionaries are looking forward to the arrival of more in the not-too-distant future. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

The Airplane Crash in El Salvador

The Cubans reportedly were involved in the arms trafficking that came to light with the crash of a Panamanian-registered airplane in El Salvador on 15 June

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[REDACTED]

Actual shipments reportedly began by [REDACTED] using many elements of the network already established to deliver the arms that the Salvadoran revolutionaries had been buying on their own account.

[REDACTED]

Panama rushed through a swift but superficial investigation of the incident, designed primarily to exculpate the government for domestic and international consumption. A number of [REDACTED] reports, however, indicate that a variety of officials are involved in at least the mercenary aspects of clandestine arms trafficking. These include Panamanian National Guard G-2 chief Manuel Noriega, who apparently played an instrumental role in [REDACTED] the airplane that subsequently crashed in El Salvador. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Costa Rica, for its part, seems unlikely soon to cease being an entrepot for illegal munitions. The local press has kept the arms-trafficking question alive, but this has had little more effect than the recent resignation of two mid-level security officers protesting their superiors' lack of support for a thorough investigation of the issue. Given the widespread involvement of top officials for personal gain, President Carazo faces an acute political dilemma. Since either a whitewash or full disclosure

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would be equally damaging, he is likely to continue favoring a slow and inconclusive course, hoping that new concerns eventually will replace the arms issue. [REDACTED]

Other Cuban Contacts with Central American Leftists

Costa Rica:

[REDACTED]

Honduras:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Nicaragua:

Guatemala:



[REDACTED]

Other Developments

[REDACTED]

The fragility of the "unity pact" announced last month by the various Guatemalan revolutionary groups was underlined by the squabbling reported between two of the organizations [REDACTED]