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CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
RELEASE AS SANITIZED

8 October 1952

2003

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Central American Situation

1. At four p.m. on 8 October 1952, a meeting was held in the State Department. Present were: DB, HFM, EGM, and TCM of State and FGW, JCK, [ ] of CIA. FGW on behalf of the Director stated that it had been the understanding of the Agency that the State Department had approved of the Agency's project to provide certain hardware to a group planning violence against a certain government; that some question had apparently arisen as to whether State does approve; that the fact of the Agency's not having kept the Department informed of the developments in the project was not considered by the Agency to be any reason for doubting that the Department still approved because it had been understood that the Department did not wish to be kept informed of the detailed plans. In the Director's view, the Agency is purely an executive organization of the Government which carries out missions and conducts activities in support of the foreign policy objectives of the Government. The State Department has the primary responsibility in the field of foreign policy and accordingly, the Agency would do nothing that is considered by the State Department to be contrary to its policy determinations. If the State Department disapproves of this particular project, the Agency will take immediate steps to bring to a halt its participation in all phases of the matter deemed objectionable by the State Department.

2. In a discussion regarding the basis for the Agency's having understood that the Department approved the project, FGW referred to the Agency's records of conversations between AD and EGM. The latter recalled his statements to AD and SH on July tenth in which he had said that he felt the risk of providing arms was too great but that he had no objection to monetary contributions. He recalled that he had also stated that a large American company must be protected almost as strongly as the United States Government because South Americans do not make any distinction between

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the two in their political thinking and because trouble for the Company involves the Department in getting it out of trouble. FGW stated that AD had told [ ] on or about August thirteenth that the Agency had the green light to go ahead on the project but in the absence of AD he did not know what was the basis of this statement. DB stated that although he had some telephone conversations with the Director he did not recall having said anything that could be interpreted as approval.

3. Messrs. DB, HFW, and EGM pointed to the remarks of General S to the effect that he had the approval of the United States Government to go ahead with a plan. JCK and [ ] gave assurances that General S had gotten no such approval from representatives of the Agency, and it was agreed that General S's statements could be based only upon remarks made to him by members of the White House staff. The CIA officials pointed out that large quantities of arms have been acquired by the target government and other leftist groups in the Caribbean; that a revolutionary movement against the target is likely whether we support it or not, and that if it fails, American policy will be seriously prejudiced. The State Department officials made clear their feeling that if anything occurred there must be no question of any part of the American Government having had a hand in it, and they were not convinced that the plan for supplying the arms, insofar as they know the details, could be carried out without a breach of security.

4. In conclusion DB stated that the Department approves of many of the activities which the Agency is carrying out throughout the world and does not like to be called obstructionist, but in the present case, as it has been called upon to approve an export permit, it is forced to state that it disapproves of the entire deal. He stated that the Department can raise no objection to any monetary contribution which the Agency might make as it knows that the Agency is constantly passing money for purposes which the Department could not approve of and must do this in order to operate, but it feels that money can be passed securely. The State Department officials present, however, expressed their surprise that [ ] should be again mixing up in a Central American revolution and cautioned against using it as a go-between.

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