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Central Intelligence Agency




Washington, D. C. 20305

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SECDEF HAS SF.M

21 AUG 1979

17 August 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Harold Brown
The Secretary of Defense


I asked our people to explore the extent of Cuba's CA program. I think you will find the result interesting.


Frank C. Carlucci

Attachment

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Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: FEB 24 2016

CIA
EO 13526
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30-82-0205, box 7, Cuba (Apr-Aug) 1979

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30 JUL 1979

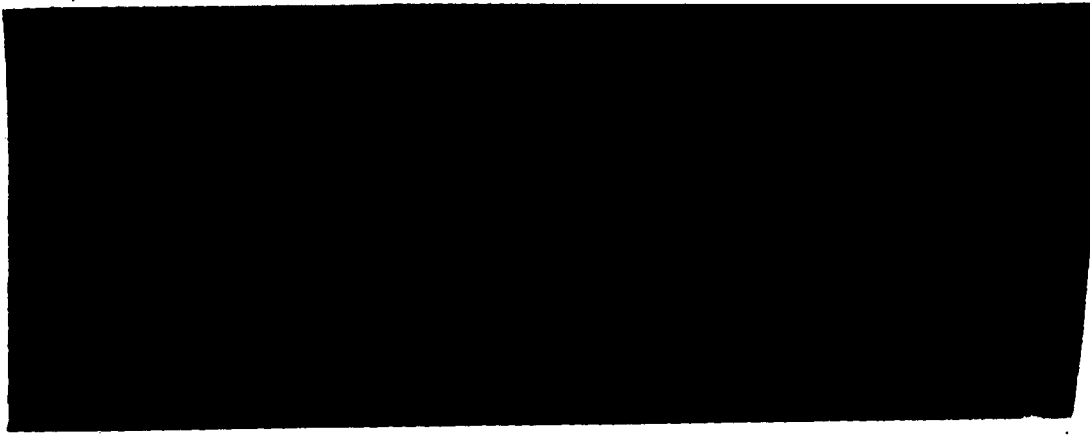
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SUBJECT: Cuban Covert Action in Central America and the Caribbean

Cuba

Over the past year Cuba has carefully orchestrated an extensive and complicated covert action operation designed to bring down the Somoza government and put the FSLN in power. During the last few months Cuban clandestine support became massive, with known results. We cite below some of the more significant recent items of intelligence evidencing the overall Cuban connection, Fidel CASTRO's personal involvement with the Sandinistas, the roles played by Cuban advisers in direct contact with the FSLN; of money, arms and materiel passed by Cuba to the FSLN; and Cuba's covert action link with high level officials of both the Costa Rican and Panamanian governments. They were in collusion with Cubans in facilitating the transport to Nicaragua of a significant quantity of military materiel.

-- Cuban officials fostered the concept of cooperative Central American insurgency and support for the FSLN at the World Youth Festival in Havana during July-August 1978. They also sponsored a meeting of representatives from 15 Latin American insurgent organizations and urged them to stage dramatic operations in their respective countries.



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-- On 3 July, Eden PASTORA Gomez, FSLN Southern Front Commander (who received training in Cuba) secretly visited Fidel CASTRO Ruz in Cuba. He was accompanied by Julian LOPEZ Diaz, senior Cuban advisor to the FSLN in Costa Rica.

-- Fidel CASTRO and other Cuban officials frequently observed the loading of an aircraft which transported arms materiel to Costa Rica. From mid May to 15 July, a DC-6 aircraft made 20 flights directly from Playa Baracoa Military Air Base in Havana to the Llano Grande Airport in Liberia, Costa Rica, to deliver weapons, ammunitions and other military equipment for the FSLN. Each flight carried a cargo of 30,000 pounds. The plane was usually met upon arrival in Liberia by the Chief of Staff of the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Security, and also by the Director General of the Office of Territorial Security of the Costa Rican Civil Guard. The Costa Rican Minister of Public Security approved these flights after coordination with Julian LOPEZ Diaz, senior Cuban advisor to the FSLN in Costa Rica.

-- Cuba obtained cooperation of the Panamanian government for the use of Panama as a transit site for the movement of FSLN guerrillas from Nicaragua to Cuba for training, and for their subsequent return to Nicaragua.

-- Another DC-6 aircraft was used to deliver supplies for the FSLN from Cuba to the Tocumen Airport in Panama City. Under the direction of Panamanian authorities the supplies were off loaded from the DC-6 and loaded onto a DC-3 and a variety of lighter aircraft for transport to Liberia, Costa Rica.

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-- As well as tactical advice and guidance, Cuba provided the bulk of the arms used in Nicaragua by the FSLN. The arms included U.S. weapons which had been captured by the Vietnamese and, also, Soviet weapons. The arms provided by Cuba to the FSLN have been reportedly replaced by the Soviet Union.

-- The Cubans directed military operations in Nicaragua from a "situations room" located in the basement of the Headquarters in Havana of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. Communications in the "situations room" between Havana and Nicaragua and Costa Rica appeared to be highly sophisticated and instantaneous.

-- Instances of the Cuban passage of money to the FSLN:

During late May and again in mid June Cuban advisors passed \$500,000 to FSLN leaders.

On 5 July Julian LOPEZ Diaz passed \$36,885 to a member of the National Directorate of the FSLN/T, and \$45,081 to a FSLN leader. Cubans also handled conversion of gold bars confiscated by the FSLN. One such transaction on 6 July was worth an estimated \$600,000.

On 10 July, Pedro LOBAINA Jimenez, Prensa Latina representative and also a Cuban advisor to the FSLN in Costa Rica, passed \$100,000 to a FSLN leader.

-- With respect to Cuban and other Latin American persons located before 19 July in Nicaragua, a FSLN leader gave out the following information: there were a total of approximately 30 Cuban advisors with the FSLN, some of whom were in Southern Nicaragua, but none involved in a combat capacity. Additionally, there were about 350 Cuban-trained members of Communist parties from throughout Latin America fighting with the FSLN in Nicaragua. Also, from separate reporting, during early July Cuban officials planned to have a group of 30 Hondurans, who had been sent to Cuba for military training, return to Honduras and be then sent to Nicaragua during late July to fight as a unit with the FSLN. They would be accompanied by Cuban advisors. Furthermore, planning had been made for a group of 20-30 Salvadoran military specialists of the Communist Party of El Salvador to infiltrate Nicaragua via Honduras.

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-- Cuba can be expected to engage in similar covert action operations against other Central American countries and against certain states in the Caribbean. Fidel CASTRO, in mid June, said that after the fall of Nicaragua attention would be turned to solidifying socialist gains in Costa Rica, Panama and Honduras. He described the Honduran military as a "bright spot" in Central America, believing the Honduran army to be "susceptible to change and realistic." CASTRO commented that after the Central American governments became responsive to Cuban influence, the Guatemalan government will become isolated and fall.

-- During July 1979, Armando Ulises ESTRADA Fernandez became the new Cuban Ambassador to Jamaica. ESTRADA, whose last position was Deputy Chief of the America Department of the PCC/CC, is considered a highly professional intelligence officer. He participated substantially in molding the various factions of the FSLN into a united front. It is expected that ESTRADA, apart from his duties in Jamaica, will have large responsibility for covert action operations throughout the Caribbean.

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Reason: 3.3(b)(2)
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