



POLICY

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

#16

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: DEC 04 2018

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

84 OCT 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Today's Inter-Agency Paper on Cuba and Central
America ~~(S)~~ -- INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

(U) A revised version of this paper has now been prepared today and agreed to by State, JCS and us. It has the same structure as the penultimate draft I sent you by courier to London.

~~(S)~~ For your position on these three basic policies, you want to keep in mind the following pros and cons:

Option 1: Although we will have to expend a fair amount of political capital to get Congressional support even for this option, it is dubious that it will succeed. At best, it may buy us some time. The continuing Cuban buildup in Nicaragua is bound to become an issue domestically and reflect unfavorably on the Reagan Administration abroad. If permitted to go on unconstrained, it will discourage opposition to communist insurgents throughout Central America.

Option 2: I recommend that this be our preferred option -- a recommendation without wild enthusiasm because this option, as well, has serious risks and will require a most strenuous (and successful) effort to obtain Congressional support. Key uncertainties are:

- To what extent the anti-Sandinista movement would succeed.
- To what extent the Cuban buildup in Nicaragua would be faster than our efforts to counter it.
- The extent to which our effort to interdict Cuban support would draw us into an armed conflict with Cuban forces, and whether it would provoke troublesome Soviet threats, or even Soviet countermeasures.

~~Declassify on 24 October 1981~~

OCT 26 1981

DEP SEC HAS SEEN

~~SECRET~~ SENSITIVE

330-88-0144, bx 2, NSPG

R1
18-U-2215

~~SECRET~~

~~SENSITIVE~~

Option 3: I still have serious difficulties in finding any merit in Option 3, or even in fully understanding how it is supposed to work. If Al Haig continues to push this option, I would recommend you use the following arguments against it.

- Obtaining a majority in the House for the necessary Congressional backing (a Joint Resolution would probably be the vehicle) will be more difficult for this option than for Option 2.
- Perhaps the weakest point in this option is the assumption that a favorable agreement can be negotiated with Castro. Castro has shown before that he knows how to wiggle out of these agreements. For example, if we reached some agreement for stopping Cuban assistance to Communist insurgents in Central America, I would consider it no more valuable than the agreement we reached with Hanoi in 1973 for halting their support to the Vietcong. But more serious is the likelihood that under the impact of Soviet counterpressures, skillful Cuban resistance, and growing opposition to the Administration's policy at home and abroad, the President could be forced into concluding an agreement with Castro (with Brezhnev acting as the mediator??) merely to get off the hook on the blockade. That agreement could turn out to be a triumph for our adversaries, but a Munich for us. Thus the important difference between Option 2 and Option 3 is that Option 2 does not depend on striking a successful bargain with Castro. Indeed, a setback for the Sandinistas (aimed for by Option 2), might weaken Castro as much, or perhaps more, than the best plausible outcome of Option 3. And Option 2 would leave open the pursuit of longer-term measures for putting pressure on Castro, which might weaken him further, or will eventually lead to his downfall.

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: DEC 04 2018

Getting Public and Congressional Support:

This effort has to be designed carefully, a single speech or a "white book" won't do. We will have to start a program (I would recommend starting it right now) to sanitize information that can be used in many different ways: for classified briefings with Congress, as backgrounders, in various speeches, etc. It is my hunch that the most effective way of marshalling public opinion would be for the Administration to spend several weeks to present the danger and the scope of Cuban intervention, and to encourage a wave of requests from Members of Congress and in the press that the United States should act. In the end, we could then appear to respond to

~~SECRET~~

~~SENSITIVE~~

~~SECRET~~

SENSITIVE

public demand for doing something with specific proposals, rather than getting out ahead of the public mood. Ideally, one would want to have the supportive climate ready when Congressional action is needed on these options, much as the mood of the country was ready for the President's increased defense program last spring.

Fred
Fred C. Ikle

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS 505C4552
Date: 04 Dec 2018 Authority: EO 13526
Declassify: X Deny in Full: _____
Declassify in Part: _____
Reason: _____
MDR: 18 -M- 225

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: DEC 04 2018

~~SECRET~~

SENSITIVE