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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR  
NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Putting the Cubans and Soviets on the Defensive

In your memorandum of 26 December 1979 to the Secretary of State on U.S. Policy to the Caribbean, you asked the question, "How do we help to shape an environment in the Eastern Caribbean in which the Cubans are on the defensive rather than us?" At the time, we were already working on the question, albeit in a somewhat different context.

The result of this effort has been a proposal for a regional policy aimed at using covert and overt actions on a regional basis to counter a problem which we perceive to be a regional one. Since this effort was completed we received our copy of your related task for a look at our military and intelligence capabilities to support our options in El Salvador and Honduras. That effort is in hand and we are working closely with State toward the response. I consider it worthwhile, however, to provide you separately with the attached proposal which, I believe, responds more directly to your earlier question. Furthermore, our proposal includes a range of options which will require a new Presidential Finding for the region, the preparation of which can be undertaken separately.

A major provision of our plan permits the disruption of arms and supplies to Cuban/Soviet supported groups and the disruption of Cuban/Soviet covert lines of communication. I recognize this will be controversial and will require careful additional study, in particular by the Special Activities Working Group of the SCC(I).

I ask you to consider putting our plan before the SCC for review and approval for implementation.

*Harold Brown*

Attachment

cc: Secretary of State  
Director of Central Intelligence

Review on 22 January 1986

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SEC DEF CONTR No. X-06348

DECLASSIFIED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE  
INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,  
E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)

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DECLASSIFICATION DATE: December 02, 2016

OBJECTIVE

(S) [Redacted]  
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The policy and plan are to be in support of and supplementary to the recommendations made by Ambassador Habib for the Caribbean and to similar recommendations we expect will be made for Latin America. It also provides a direct response to Dr. Brzezinski's memorandum of 26 December 1979, asking "how do we help to shape an environment in the Eastern Caribbean in which the Cubans are on the defense rather than us?"

BACKGROUND

- (U) The countries of the Caribbean and Latin America are in a period of political, economic, and social transition.

-- The islands of the Caribbean are achieving independence and seek to shed all vestiges of their former colonial status. They face serious economic problems now and into the near future.

-- The nations of Central America are under severe pressures, including for some, revolution and subversion, which threaten to bring about radical political, economic, and social change.

- (S) Cuba, while not the cause of the basic pressure for change, is actively exploiting economic, political, and social difficulties and the resulting instability to promote further instability and force changes of their choosing and direction, thereby weakening ties of these nations with the U.S. and the west and promoting ties to Cuba and the Soviets.

-- They have already achieved significant success or influence in Jamaica, Guyana, Grenada, and Nicaragua.

-- They are now supporting guerrilla groups in El Salvador and Guatemala and, with the Soviets, are encouraging PLO support to dissident groups in Guatemala, El Salvador, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic.

- (S) Cuba has developed an extensive Covert Action mechanism to support and carry out its subversions.

-- This mechanism is probably under the direction of the American Department of the Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee, whose officials, mostly experienced intelligence officers, operate abroad under cover.

• Three of its officials are assigned as Ambassadors in Panama, Jamaica, and Nicaragua.

- Cuba conducted an impressive covert action operation in support of the FSLN in Nicaragua. This support was a critical factor in the final FSLN victory.
  - At least 30 Cuban advisors were with FSLN.
  - Cubans directed military operations in Nicaragua from Havana.
  - Cuba provided at least \$700K support to FSLN and has laundered other monies for them.
- Cuba has extensive covert contacts in, among other, Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Grenada, and Nicaragua.
- This mechanism is the primary asset of Cuban subversion in the area and El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras are probably targeted as its next most likely successes.

PROPOSED POLICY

- (S) In support of U.S. Foreign Policy, counter Cuban and Soviet supported covert activities, subversion, and anti-U.S. operations in the Caribbean and Latin America through the use of counter-covert actions, exploitation of Cuban and Soviet vulnerabilities, and the dissemination of maximum adverse publicity of these Cuban and Soviet activities. Properly sanitized and sterilized U.S. intelligence may be employed when approved in accordance with NSC procedures.

- (S) U.S. Covert Actions Permitted:

- Disruption of arms supplies to Cuban/Soviet supported groups and disruption of lines of communication and supply supporting Cuban/Soviet covert activities (this will need careful study by the Special Activities Working Group of the SCC(I)).
- Identification, infiltration and exposure of the Cuban/Soviet covert action structure, personnel, and plans.
- Infiltration of groups supported by the Cubans/Soviets.
- [redacted] embarrass and expose Cuban/Soviet covert action organizations.
- Use of U.S. covert action infrastructure to keep Caribbean and Latin America nations apprised of Cuban/Soviet plans and actions.

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-- Clandestine broadcasts both into and out of (simulated) Cuba, exposing repressive measures of Cuban regime, economic hardships, mismanagement, etc.

- (S) Overt U.S. Actions Permitted:

-- Use of ICA/VOA to publicize actual Cuban/Soviet covert and subversive activities.

-- Use of public affairs/press offices of the U.S. Government departments and agencies to release adverse information on Cuban/Soviet activities.

-- Use of Department of State diplomatic channels to convey such information openly to foreign officials.

- (S) Suggested Themes for Exploitation:

-- The Soviet Union and Cuba have both shared and unique vulnerabilities in the Western Hemisphere which can be exploited.

-- Shared:

• Atheistic communism contrary to Latin America Christian philosophy.

• Human rights violations.

• Cubans and Soviets cannot or are unwilling to provide substantial long-term economic assistance.

• Use of press, civil airlines and intelligence officers assigned abroad to spread Marxist ideology.

• Use of youth, labor and women's movements to develop and expand contacts with and proselytize foreign leftists.

• Radio Moscow, Novosti, and Radio Havana are propaganda -- not objective news mechanisms -- and are used to broadcast party line abroad.

• Heavy use of training courses in USSR and Cuba for ideological indoctrination -- you never get just the training you were promised.

• Soviet Brigade in Cuba -- a palace guard for Castro?

• Massive influx of arms from Soviet Union to Cuba since 1975 supports Cuban surrogate roles for Soviets in Latin America, Caribbean, Africa, and Mid-East.

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Cuban:

- Expansionist and Soviet surrogate activities promoting subversion and revolution. (Grenada, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Cuban military intervention abroad (35,000 Cuban troops in Africa))
  - o Role of American Department of Cuban Party Central Committee.
  - o Subversive role of three ambassadors who are intelligence officers (Panama, Jamaica, Nicaragua).
- Military role in Grenada.
- Castro's personal involvement with Sandinistas.
- Cuban covert action link with Costa Rican and Panamanian governments.
- Domestic disquiet, economic problems, and applications of repressive measures.
- Current sizeable increase in refugee flow from Cuba.
- Role in Non-Aligned Movement (support of Soviets as "natural ally" of the Third World), especially in light of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.
  - o Cuban failure to condemn that invasion completely discredits its leadership of and membership in NAM.
- Exiles and political prisoners as examples of Cuban failures.
- Economic mismanagement and low productivity at home.
- Cuban dependence on Soviet subsidies for economic survival.
- Official and unofficial condemnation by Latin American organizations. e.g., Organization of American States, Inter-American Defense Board, Inter-American Development Bank, Caribbean Common Market.

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Soviet:

- Soviets have reputation for "meddling" especially sensitive in light of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent world reaction.
- Soviet aid comes with "string," i.e., technicians, advisors and is usually "tied" to expensive trade arrangements. Aid and technicians/advisors used to achieve dependence on Soviets and as tools of subversion.
- Reputation for providing poor quality equipment, for not providing adequate spare parts, and not providing adequate repair facilities -- thus necessitating returning equipment to Soviet Union for major work.
  - o Lack of attraction of Soviet model.