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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
8 March 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Plotting Against Goulart

1. Conservative elements of the Brazilian military are formulating plans for a possible effort to depose President Joao Goulart. The man behind what appears to be the best-developed plan is retired Marshal Odylio Denys, Minister of War under ex-president Janio Quadros and leader of the opposition to Goulart's accession to the presidency in 1961. The plan calls for cooperation by military commanders in key states against the central government with recalcitrant governors being arrested by local commanders who would then replace them.

2. Denys--like many of the Brazilian military--is known to be strongly opposed to President Goulart. He stated on 7 March, however, that he will not put in motion any revolutionary plan until President Goulart makes some move which would win widespread support for a countermove. The military are specifically entrusted in the Constitution of 1946 with the protection of the constitution and their interventions in the government are traditionally based on this concept. Indeed the Brazilian military prides itself in the belief that, unlike other Latin American military establishments, it does not act unconstitutionally; past actions by the military against the government have been justified on the grounds that they were necessary to preserve the constitution.

3.

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4. A premature coup effort by the Brazilian military would be likely to bring a strong reaction from Goulart and the cashiering of those officers who are most friendly to the United States.

5. Denys needs considerably more support than we can now credit to him to bring off a successful coup. Such support might develop if Goulart should give the War Ministry to General Csuiuo Alves, the far-left commander of the First Army in Rio de Janeiro, or if he should replace a state government's authority by his own. Both courses of action have been urged on Goulart. A successful coup under these circumstances would probably see constitutional government quickly restored.

6. Lacking this kind of catalyst, Denys could conceivably still succeed by putting together a lucky combination of well-placed military commanders. In this case, we think Denys, even in the face of the Brazilian military tradition, might establish military rule until he judged the way had been prepared for a conservative successor government.