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Mr. Bowdler

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~~TOP SECRET~~ MEMORANDUM

TO : G - Mr. Kohler  
FROM : ARA-- Covey T. Oliver  
SUBJECT: Handling of Documents Relating to Cuban Intervention  
Captured in Bolivia

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
NJ 92-38  
By [Signature] NARA. Date 5-26-92

In a meeting on September 1 of the IRG/ARA Committee on Counterinsurgency to determine (1) the validity of the documents in question and (2) the course of action to be followed, it was agreed that the documents could have rather broad ramifications and should therefore be considered at a higher level.

The Bolivian Government, specifically General Ovando, had instructed the Bolivian military courier who brought the documents to return before the resumption of the Debray trial with the most important documents and a report of their analysis which would provide answers to two questions:

1. Has Che Guevara been present in Bolivia?
2. Is there proof of Cuban participation in the guerrilla operations?

A response to General Ovando's request raises at least the following questions:

1. Does it involve us in the Debray trial in a way that

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would hurt us and the Bolivians? The Communists, for example, may assert we fabricated the documents. The French press may charge we are out to get Debray, etc.

2. How much technical analysis should we provide? On all documents? On only some? In writing? Orally?
3. Should we encourage Bolivia to seek help elsewhere?
4. Can the documents be used in the OAS case of Venezuela vs. Cuba?
5. Should we counsel Bolivia to disclose some documents, but not all, since some of the documents provide additional intelligence leads that may be valuable?

Various alternatives were suggested for handling the problem. The possibility was noted that the return of the Bolivian courier with the documents and report could, if necessary, be delayed for a few days to permit adequate time for implementing whichever option were chosen. The 5 options considered were:

1. To return the documents with a technical report for the Bolivian Government to use at the trial, i.e., respond to the Ovando request.
2. Have the Bolivian Government publicly announce that it had captured certain documents, especially passports,

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and request the U.S. Government to provide experts on identification to analyze the documents.

3. To follow the same procedure as (2.) but for the Bolivian Government to direct its request to several countries including the U.S. Other possible countries include Argentina, where Guevara was born, Mexico, Peru, and Guatemala where he is known to have lived, and Brazil where among other places the passports were used.
4. To follow the same procedure as in (2.) but with the Bolivian Government request directed to the OAS and with member governments of the OAS being called on to assist on the verification as feasible.
5. To follow the procedure of (4.) but include the request that the OAS establish an investigating committee with the purpose of coordinating the efforts of member governments.

Of the various alternatives: The first has the deficiency of linking the U.S. too closely to the Debray trial. Alternative 2 also represents an unnecessary involvement of the U.S. on a bilateral basis. As between Bolivia calling on various countries individually and turning to the OAS for assistance, the latter would be preferable, if feasible, particularly since it would

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coincide with the forthcoming meeting of the OAS Foreign Ministers to consider Cuban intervention in Venezuela. The evidence which has been found in the Bolivian case would generally strengthen the anti-Cuban case in the MFN. Finally, alternative 3 is preferable to 4 because it includes a formal OAS mechanism for dealing with the Bolivian issue.

However, the Bolivian Government has so far been unwilling to utilize the OAS machinery on its guerrilla problem or associate its case with the Venezuelan case. There is also the complicating problem that the OAS machinery may grind too slowly to meet Bolivia's needs.

Thus, I suggest we encourage Bolivia to follow alternative 3 on the passports and the false OAS documentation. We should ask the Bolivian Government to keep secret the documents on communications procedures for further study. Moreover, a preliminary analysis of them suggests that they would be useful publicly only if we were willing to disclose U.S. communications intelligence.

ARA/DC:WBroderick:nf  
RMSayre:ars 9/2/67

cc: Mr. Lister, Mr. Allen

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