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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

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18 May 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Walt W. Rostow
Chairman, Policy Planning Council

SUBJECT : Office of National Estimates Memorandum,
"Security Conditions in Mexico -- and
elsewhere in Latin America" (6 May 1966)

I thought you would be interested in the attached,
whose central message is conveyed in the opening paragraph.

Duh
Richard Helms
Deputy Director

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Authority CIA letter NOV 21 1978
By isp, NARS, Date 8-9-79

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

6 May 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Security Conditions in Mexico -- and elsewhere in
Latin America

NOTE TO THE DIRECTOR

Our most recent "security conditions" estimate (SNIE 81-66) -- in connection with President Johnson's visit to Mexico -- posed little difficulty in the writing and proved accurate in the fact. But we have since become concerned that the good experience in Mexico City might lead to an erroneous assumption that the amount of risk would be just about the same in other major Latin American countries.

MEMORANDUM

1. There are important factors contributing to a favorable security situation in Mexico which simply do not apply to other major Latin American countries. In Mexico,

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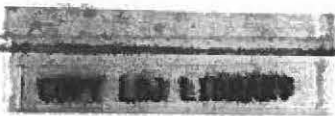
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the government party virtually monopolizes politics and is an outstanding force for stability. Top government leaders are strong, determined men, conversant with the uses of power. Security forces are tough and well-trained; when so ordered, they carry out missions without overmuch regard for legalisms.

Some Specifics Concerning the President's Visit

2. The scope and thoroughness of the preparations made by Mexican security authorities for President Johnson's visit to Mexico City drew favorable comment from US Secret Service officials. Of course, selected Mexican officials -- as well as a number of officials in Washington -- knew some days in advance that the visiting party would include the President himself, in addition to Mrs. Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk. The measures they took were therefore far-reaching, as well as secure. (The press found out in advance of the planned announcement that the President was going too, but the leak was not in Mexico.)

3. Some of the steps the Mexican government took in advance would have been out of the question in many countries. The police detained about 500 potential "trouble-makers," almost



all of them men with criminal records rather than people of suspect political views. To handle the political side of the problem, the security authorities let it be known that they wanted to talk with 48 leaders of various small leftist political groupings likely to take part in anti-US demonstrations. Forty-seven of these individuals promptly appeared and were informed in no uncertain terms that they would be held personally responsible for any unseemly activities by their memberships. Mexican security police raided the Communist party's printing shop to confiscate propaganda leaflets being prepared for the visit and, in another foray, picked up a huge banner that the Communist youth organization was readying.

4. The array and positioning of Mexican security personnel, particularly for the President's arrival and trip from airport to city center, was carefully worked out. Basic protection along the route was by 6,000 police. Members of the government party's youth organization were much in evidence among the crowds lining the way. Large additional numbers of police were on hand for supporting duties, and had there been a requirement, at least 11,000 army troops were available in the city or its environs.

5. All these measures sufficed to forestall any glaring incident or disturbance, but there were a number of abortive attempts to get something started. No-nonsense police action nipped these in the bud, and so rapidly that most of the visitors and the Mexican public were not aware of more than one or two. Several small-scale student demonstrations were quickly broken up. One group approached to within six blocks of the US Embassy before the police took away their signs and turned them aside. A few other students got access to the university radio station and began to broadcast anti-Johnson remarks, but in less than a minute government monitors cut the electrical supply. The man who began at one point to run after the presidential automobile seemed to be trying to shout about Castro or Vietnam, but before he could make his argument he lost it to a policeman's stick.

6. One additional point worth noting concerns the behavior of Mexican President Diaz Ordaz. He was, of course, ultimately responsible for the effective precautions taken. Beyond that, he made a point of staying physically close to President Johnson during their public appearances, as though to underline the proposition that an attack on the US President

would also be an attack on the President of Mexico. There are in Mexico a fair number of people who are rabidly anti-US but who would not for a moment consider a violent action against their own chief of state.

The Contrast in Other Major Latin American Countries

7. The essential points of difference with other major Latin American countries are two: they have larger and better-organized anti-government groups which are sharply anti-Yankee; their security services are less effective than the Mexican.* The danger is probably also somewhat greater of a violent act on the part of an individual, simply because anti-US sentiment and criticism of the US administration are more vehement and widespread in most of these other countries than in Mexico.

8. The nature and extent of the security problem in these other Latin American countries varies, of course, from one to the other and may, in any one of them, change quickly.

* The Chilean police are as good or better than the Mexicans in most functions. But they do not have an equivalent intelligence capability and in some activities might be hampered by legal considerations and traditional respect for the rights of the individual.

In Chile, bitterness toward the US is presently strong among the memberships of the large socialist and communist parties, and also among some of the younger folk of the less extreme left. In Argentina, certain tough Peronista elements would probably have to be reckoned with, along with the far left; certainly the Argentine military would be resolute in taking thorough security measures, but the Illia government might be less so. In Venezuela, the activists of the communist and Castroist parties can still, despite the increased effectiveness of the security forces, undertake successful hit-and-run operations. The problem in Colombia could be a complicated one involving both left and right extremists. Brazil or Peru would be less difficult than the countries mentioned above -- though more difficult than Mexico.*

9. This does not mean we think it likely that President Johnson would be endangered or seriously embarrassed on a visit to one of these countries. But the degree of risk -- very small

* Protection in certain of the smaller countries (e.g., Costa Rica, Paraguay) would be easier and in others (e.g., the Dominican Republic, Panama, Bolivia) harder. However, it seems likely that if, at some future date, the President does make a Latin American trip, one or more of the larger countries will be involved.

in the Mexican case -- would probably be appreciably larger in any of them and several times larger in some. In any event, plans and arrangements should be so devised as to give the security forces maximum opportunity to provide protection. Beyond this, it appears to us that the dangers of injury to the President's person, or to the US image, would be large enough to require that they be carefully weighed against the objectives that the presidential visit was designed to achieve.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

Sherman Kent

SHERMAN KENT
Chairman