

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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Mandatory Review

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Case # NLI 91-39

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE HOLDERS OF SNIE 80-61: SECURITY CONDITIONS
IN CARACAS AND BOGOTA

The United States Intelligence Board has reviewed SNIE 80-61,
"Security Conditions in Caracas and Bogota," dated 7 December
1961, in the light of information subsequently received (as set
forth in the Annex), and hereby reaffirms that estimate, which
is summarized as follows:

1. The governments of Venezuela and Colombia are
vitaly interested in the success of the President's visit, they
will be alert to protect him from danger or embarrassment, and
they have forces at their disposal adequate to maintain general
control of the situation. Nevertheless, there are elements in
both countries eager to create the appearance of popular antag-
onism toward the US and popular rejection of the Alliance for
Progress, and at the same time to discredit their own governments.
These elements will almost certainly take advantage of the occasion
to stage some sort of hostile demonstration. The nature and effect
of these efforts will depend in large measure on the immediate

circumstances and the manner in which the security forces deal with the occasion.

2. The object of most hostile efforts would almost certainly be to subject the President and his party to personal indignity rather than to physical injury, but some risk of the latter is inherent in the circumstances. There is, of course, a possibility of an assassination attempt by some fanatic individual or small group.

3. The situation in Caracas could be adversely affected by developments in the Dominican Republic, particularly if it could be made to appear that the US was supporting the restoration of military dictatorship there.

The significant information received since 7 December 1961 is summarized at Annex.

ANNEX

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED SINCE 7 DECEMBER 1961

Caracas

1. The Venezuelan Government has received information that leftist opposition groups will attempt to assassinate President Betancourt before the arrival of President Kennedy.
2. The Communist Politburo is fully agreed that strong action is required on the occasion of President Kennedy's visit (but excluding his assassination) in order to discredit the Betancourt regime and the Alliance for Progress. There is a division of opinion regarding what should be done. A militant faction desires to attack military and police barracks, dynamite bridges on the route from the airport to the city, block traffic, stage demonstrations at the airport, along the route to the city, and in slum areas, and provoke the police to fire on youthful demonstrators. Another faction apparently prefers to extemporize and desires to limit the amount of violence involved.
3. The wave of demonstrations and violence which began on 28 November has diminished. Hostile agitation continues, principally in the form of painting slogans on walls and

distributing leaflets. Acts of violence still occur, but the police appear to have the situation reasonably in hand. Most of the high schools have been closed and some university students have dispersed for the holidays. While extremist students are reported to be planning disturbances, the President has warned that the University will be promptly occupied if disorders begin there.

4. The authorities responsible for maintaining security during the President's visit have renewed their assurances, but acknowledge that scattered and minor disturbances may occur.

5. An effort to build up positive popular support for the President's visit is well underway. President Detancourt, addressing the CTV (labor federation) Congress, distinguished the circumstances of this occasion from those of Mr. Nixon's visit and called on the militants of the coalition parties and the working class to be on the streets to give a cordial welcome to a President "who represents a new thinking toward and preoccupation with Latin America rooted in the Rooseveltian Good Neighbor Policy." These sentiments were enthusiastically applauded. The Cardinal has issued a pastoral letter calling for the avoidance of disagreeable

incidents that would dishonor the country. The press and radio are also calling for a warm and friendly welcome under the slogan "Jacqueline Si, Kennedy Tambien."

Bogota

6. The Colombian Communists and other extreme leftists did not foment any significant popular manifestation against the Colombian Government's breach of diplomatic relations with Cuba. They have apparently concluded that neither personal attacks on President Kennedy nor large-scale demonstrations will be feasible during the President's visit. Their plans are apparently confined primarily to painting slogans on walls and distributing propaganda leaflets, although there is some talk of student demonstrations.

7. Other disaffected elements -- e.g., the Rojistas and the Gaitanistas -- have apparently decided to take advantage of the occasion to make their point by turning out in force to cheer the President while booing the Colombian authorities.