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WASHINGTON

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August 22, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Insurgency in Bolivia

Attached is the report on insurgency in Bolivia requested in Dr. Kissinger's memorandum of July 24, 1970. It reflects interagency views. It consists of a brief summary and a more detailed attachment. It concludes that there is no need for special United States efforts at this time beyond the accelerated delivery of supplies in the pipeline, some MAP diversions, and cash sales of ammunition. If the prospects for the threat change, we will promptly reassess the situation.

Our review of the Bolivian insurgency issue has led us to decide to undertake a separate study of the degree and nature of links among insurgent groups across national boundaries in Latin America (such as those reportedly existing between the Tupamaros of Uruguay and some other groups in other countries).

U. Alexis Johnson  
Acting Chairman

Attachment:

Tab A - Report on Insurgency  
in Bolivia

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SUBJECT: Insurgency in Bolivia: A Summary Statement

A. Size, Nature, Scope and Potential of Guerrilla Threat

The immediate threat is the existence of a small band of armed men who recently dynamited the installations of an isolated American-owned mining company, abducted two employees (later releasing them in exchange for the government's release of ten guerrilla prisoners) and who presently are attempting to elude army pursuers and make their way through jungle and mountains in the direction of the Peruvian border. Of an original group of 60-70 men, including third country nationals and Bolivians trained in guerrilla tactics in Cuba as well as inexperienced university students, nearly a score have surrendered or been killed in clashes with the army. The raiders belong to a pro-Castro guerrilla organization called the ELN, which survived the demise of "Che" Guevara in 1967. In addition to the Cuban training inputs, the Tupamaros of Uruguay have provided financial and possibly other help to the ELN. There exists an ELN apparatus capable of committing acts of terrorism in the major cities, but we have little information regarding its size, extent, or intentions. We are

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unable to assess with any degree of certainty the ELN's capability to carry out sustained guerrilla operations at this time. However, the attack on the mining camp thus far has not been followed by any other outbreaks of ELN activity elsewhere in the country. Prompted by the ELN's example, the pro-Chinese Communist party, which probably does have limited capability for guerrilla operations and terrorism, recently has shown signs of intent to initiate some level of violent activity separate from that of the ELN.

B. Bolivian Capacity to Contain Insurgency

While the present threat marks the first time since "Che" Guevara's death that army troops have had to be committed to the field, the Bolivian military should be able to eliminate or at least neutralize the existing pocket of activity. However, should there occur various outbreaks of guerrilla activity simultaneously in different parts of the country, the military would be poorly prepared to cope with such a situation and police capability to control possible major urban disturbances would be extremely limited.

Another factor which could potentially limit the troops' capacity to deal with the insurgency is the serious political rift which has developed in recent weeks between President

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Ovando and his military chiefs over policy direction. These differences led to the resignation of Ovando's cabinet on August 3-4. The cabinet crisis was resolved, temporarily at least, with Ovando's acceptance of the resignation of the foremost radical civilian cabinet member, the Minister of Information, and the reconfirmation of the rest, including the military ministers. The political problems in La Paz thus far appear to have had no adverse effect on the troops' fighting capability in the field. This conceivably could change, however.

C. Summary of Present MAP and Public Safety Internal Security Assistance

The FY 1970 MAP program, divided evenly between training and materiel, totalled \$1.6 million. Delivery has begun on FY 1969 and 1970 items, including small arms, ammunition, communications equipment and tactical vehicles. Due to the Cambodian emergency the MAP materiel program for FY 1971 has been suspended and there presumably will be further reductions in the training portion. A modest public safety program is being reinstated in FY 1971 with a proposed budget of \$118,000 (which may reach \$175,000), including the provision of a two-man advisory team, training and equipment. Commodities procured in FY 1970 have recently arrived in Bolivia.

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D. Additional or Special Assistance Possibly Necessary to Meet Threat

At the Bolivians' request, we have expedited the delivery of C-rations already in the MAP pipeline. We also understand the Bolivians desire our expediting additional items under the MAP grant program as well as selling them ammunition on a cash basis. In view of the limited nature of the present threat and the likelihood that most Bolivian government requirements could be satisfied within the framework of existing MAP, FMS and public safety programs, we see no need for additional special efforts at this time beyond the accelerated delivery of supplies in the pipeline, some MAP deviations, and cash sales of ammunition. While it would be desirable to do so, there is no feasible way to attempt to significantly increase the intelligence capability of the Bolivian government under present and foreseeable circumstances. If the prospects regarding the threat were likely to change, we would be prepared to reassess the situation at that time and promptly submit revised recommendations.

E. Third Country Assistance

The Argentines, who traditionally have shown concern that their own internal security could be affected by

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instability next door, recently sent 5,000 first aid kits to Bolivia and alerted one regiment to contingency plan for possible duty in the Bolivian insurgency. There is no information that the Bolivians actually made any request to the Argentines, however, and, given the present level of threat, it is unlikely that the Bolivians would do so or that the Argentines would commit troops without a Bolivian government request. Nor is there information that any other neighbors have provided special assistance or that the Bolivians have asked or even desire this.

Should Bolivia's neighbors assume greater share of the cost burden by responding to specific Bolivian requests for help to meet its guerrilla problem, this would be desirable from the viewpoint of U.S. interests. However, active intervention by the neighbors in Bolivia beyond financial or materiel assistance, particularly troop deployments, could cause serious conflict in the center of the Hemisphere because of traditional national rivalries in the area. Whether or not such intervention would be in the U.S. interest would depend upon our assessment at the time of the specific circumstances of the case. The neighbors themselves appear to be cognizant of the problems involved in providing manpower support.

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[Omitted here is the body of the report.]