

JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF SPECIAL HISTORICAL STUDY

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND EFFORTS TO CONTAIN CASTRO, 1960 - 1964

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
AND EFFORTS TO CONTAIN CASTRO,
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Historical Division
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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND EFFORTS TO CONTAIN
CASTRO, 1960-1964

(U) As the decade of the 1960s opened, much of Latin America seemed ripe for revolution. Already, in Cuba, Fulgencio Batista had been driven from power by Fidel Castro, who promised social justice and political freedom. Castro did promulgate social reforms, but he then proceeded to turn Cuba into a communist state. Could the Cuban experience inspire similar insurgent movements? Would Castro's guerrilla campaign in the Sierra Maestra mountains be repeated in other countries? In Latin America, the competition between communism and democracy had begun.

(U) President John F. Kennedy lost little time in issuing his own appeal. On 13 March 1961, he called upon "all people of the hemisphere to join in a new Alliance for Progress . . . a vast cooperative effort, unparalleled in magnitude and nobility of purpose, to satisfy the basic needs of the American people for homes, work and land, health and schools." The 1960s, he anticipated, would be "the years of maximum progress-maximum effort, the years when the greatest obstacles must be overcome, the years when the need for assistance will be the greatest."¹

(S) The Castro challenge also compelled a reappraisal of hemispheric defense policies. In February 1961, the [State Department circulated for inter-departmental review a "new concept" under which external defense would become chiefly a US responsibility while]

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1. Public Papers of the Presidents, John F. Kennedy, 1961(1962), p. 172. The Alliance was formally organized in August at Punta del Este.

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[Latin American forces confined themselves primarily to intra-hemispheric tasks. For this latter purpose, an Inter-American Police Force ought to be organized, with US aid going largely to contributing countries. Furthermore, Latin nations should be encouraged to undertake partial disarmament, and place the resultant savings in economic development.²⁾

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(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff found serious flaws in several of these ideas. They considered the continental defense contributions already planned for Latin nations to be "limited in scope, . . . desirable and reasonably attainable." Should the Administration insist upon [reductions of these forces, several nations probably would turn for equipment to "Soviet-oriented nations." The Joint Chiefs of Staff also asserted that "existing rivalry and wide disparity in forms of government" made it unlikely that members ever could agree upon actual use of an Inter-American Police Force. Additionally, they saw little likelihood that Latin countries would reduce their armed forces. Military establishments were matters of prestige and, more practically, were essential in protecting internal security and important in preserving political stability. Moreover, they thought it unrealistic to assume that Latin American would embrace disarmament before the rest of the world did so. Even if the State Department's proposals were adopted, savings would be "relatively insignificant." And, if the United States]

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2. (S) "A New Concept for Hemispheric Defense and Development," n.d., Encl A to JCS 1976/356, 27 Feb 61; (S) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 27 Feb 61, Att to JCS 1976/356; JMF 9120/3000 (27 Feb 61).

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[tried to coerce them by curtailing military assistance, some countries would simply buy elsewhere.³]

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(U) Officials in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), with assistance from the Joint Staff and the Services, prepared a suggested policy statement that softened the State Department's more controversial propositions. According to ISA's paper, the Western Hemisphere had the most capability to deal with the least likely threat--external attack--and the least capacity to cope with the most probable danger--insurgency. Priorities and programs should be readjusted accordingly. Specific steps ought to include: making Latin nations aware of the dangers posed by Castro and communism, and of the need for taking prompt multilateral action to eliminate the threat; considering bilateral agreements that would allow the United States to assist countries that asked for help in defeating subversion and indirect aggression; trying to strengthen the Inter-American Defense Board and to establish an Inter-American Security Force; creating an Inter-American Defense College; seeking a modest increase in military assistance programs (MAP), giving first priority to internal security measures; placing new emphasis on MAPs that

³. (S) JCSM-110-61 to SecDef, 28 Feb 61, (derived from JCS 1976/357); JMF 9120/3000 (27 Feb 61). According to General Lemnitzer, the Latins deeply resented, as gross interference in their internal affairs, US efforts to tell them how large their military establishments ought to be. Interv, author with General Lemnitzer, 3 Jun 77.

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contributed to civic improvement and economic development; and encouraging regional arms control agreements.⁴

(U) The JCS assessment of these proposals was much more sympathetic. They adjudged them adequate, subject to several changes. First, include a strategic appraisal of Latin America's military importance. Second, prepare guidance for each country on possible actions to prevent a communist takeover. Third, defer establishment of an Inter-American Security Force until the concept could be tested in the Caribbean. Fourth, speak of "arms limitation" rather than "arms control"; US influence could be exerted far more effectively through MAP than through any controls resulting from regional or bilateral agreements. Fifth, take note that bilateral agreements permitting the provision of US assistance against indirect aggression appeared to be militarily undesirable. They justified their last objection by citing several complications. The United States would be obliged to keep current regimes in power; there would be difficulties in determining whether opposition movements were actually communist; and the Latin countries involved in such agreements would be surrendering some of their sovereignty. In any case, they reminded Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, one state always had the right to assist another when so requested.⁵

4. (U) "US Policy for the Security of Latin America in the Sixties," n.d., App to JCS 1976/364, 9 May 61; JMF 9122/9105 (8 May 61) (1) sec 1.

5. (U) Memo, Actg ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 8 May 61, Encl to JCS 1976/364; (S) JCSM-323-61 to SecDef, 15 May 61, (derived from JCS 1976/365); same file.

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(S) Many of these matters were reargued when, in October 1961, the State Department circulated its suggested ["Guidelines for Policy and Operations" in Latin America. This paper assigned "first priority" in US aid to internal security programs; ASW forces for hemisphere defense would be assisted only if they could effectively engage "high-speed submerged submarines." The Latin military should be encouraged, among other things, to: accept internal security as their major mission; participate in inter-American police or patrol forces; and form dual-purpose units possessing civic action as well as military capabilities. The Joint Chiefs of Staff sought several changes: add a strategic appraisal of Latin America's military importance; drop the idea of an inter-American security force; and make less demanding the definition of Latin ASW capabilities.] ISA agreed, and added several other criticisms. When the approved State Department "Guidelines" appeared in May 1962, they contained everything Defense wanted except the strategic appraisal.⁶

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(S) President Kennedy took a considerable and continuing personal interest in Latin America's counter-insurgency problems. In mid-May 1961, for example, he asked how effective the civilian police forces

6. (S) "Latin America: Dept of State Guidelines for Policy and Operations," Oct 61, pp. 50-61, Att to JCS 1976/393, 21 Nov 61; (S) Memo, Actg ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 18 Nov 61, Att to JCS 1976/393; (S) JCSM-828-61 to SecDef, 30 Nov 61 (derived from JCS 1976/395); (S) Ltr, Actg ASD(ISA) to USecState for Pol Aff, 26 Dec 61, Att to N/H of JCS 1976/395, 15 Feb 62; JMF 1922/9105 (18 Nov 61) sec 2. (S) "Latin America: Guidelines for Policy and Operations," May 62, pp. 57-67, Att to JCS 1976/488, 28 Nov 62; same file, sec 3.

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were, and what might be done to improve them. The Joint Chiefs of Staff assured him that programs for strengthening internal security were "adequate." Indeed, most countries could not absorb all the out-of-country training that had been offered. They therefore proposed greater use of in-country training and provision of additional materiel.⁷

(S) The President prodded the Joint Chiefs of Staff again in October 1961. During an inspection of Special Forces at Fort Bragg, the Chief Executive asked General George H Decker, the Chief of Staff of the Army, what more the US military, in conjunction with their Latin counterparts, could do. The JCS reply, forwarded to President Kennedy on 30 November, offered numerous recommendations. [For assisting internal security, these included: easing Congressional restrictions against using MAP for counterinsurgency; persuading the Latin military to accept an apolitical role; expanding military technical assistance; enlarging indigenous counterinsurgency capability; insuring a smooth transition as MAP shifted from hemisphere defense to internal security, counterinsurgency, civic action, and antisubmarine warfare (ASW); and improving US-Latin combined intelligence capability.] Among their hemisphere defense proposals were: making the Inter-American Defense Board more effective; establishing an Inter-American Defense College; and promoting frequent US-Latin defense conferences. For economic development, their recommendations included: encouraging the Latin military

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7. (S) Memo, CNO to JCS, 16 May 61, Encl to JCS 1976/376, same date; (S) JCSM-341-61 to Pres, 19 May 61 (derived from JCS 1976/369); JMF 9122/3360 (16 May 61).

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to devote more effort toward internal improvements; and increasing US military advisers and training teams, so as to accelerate civic action programs.⁸

(S) The President was pleased with these proposals, and asked that they be refined into workable plans. Through NSAM No. 118, issued on 5 December 1961, he ordered the State Department to draft a policy guidance paper and the Defense Department to develop specific programs. In January, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent Secretary McNamara a list of 46 such projects.⁹

(S) Meanwhile, President Kennedy worried that opportunities for military forces to assist economic and social development were being wasted. Accordingly, though NSAM No. 119, he expressed hope that civic action projects could be included within economic and military assistance programs. In February 1962, the State Department circulated a draft message saying that [MAP should fund measures aimed at increasing the Latin military's capacity to undertake civic action efforts. These would include: equipping and maintaining new units whose primary mission was civic action; supporting, when they were working on civic action projects, MAP-funded units whose primary mission was military;]

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8. (S) JCSM-832-61 to Pres, 30 Nov 61 (derived from JCS 1976/394); JMF 9122/9105 (30 Oct 61) sec 2. At President Kennedy's urging, Congress changed MAP's primary purpose from hemispheric to internal defense.

9. (S) NSAM No. 118 to SecState and SecDef, 5 Dec 61, Att to JCS 1976/396, 11 Dec 61; same file, sec 2; (S) JCSM-30-62 to SecDef, 13 Jan 62 (derived from JCS 1976/401; same file, sec 4.

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[and providing specialized equipment that would enhance civic action capability.¹⁰]

(S) After a review, the Joint Chiefs of Staff made several reservations known to Mr. McNamara. Civic action, they argued, should be undertaken not only by MAP-supported units but also with a country's own resources. Such an approach would be consistent with both the principles of self-help and the ceiling upon MAP funding. Additionally, they asserted, new units with the primary mission of civic action should be neither created nor funded under MAP. Rather, MAP-supported units should perform only such civic action tasks as were ancillary to their military mission and lay within their organic capabilities.¹¹ As will appear, OSD accepted this last argument.

(TS) Concurrently, and again at President Kennedy's urging, an interdepartmental team traveled through South America to assess the communist threat, the capacity of each country to maintain internal security and effect reforms, and US capabilities for assisting local governments.¹² The team found that there was still time to take corrective action, even in countries where the problems were most serious. As a rule, indigenous internal security forces could maintain order and suppress outbreaks of urban violence. The communists could neither overthrow any government nor sustain a large-scale struggle. The team wanted to

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10. (S) NSAM No. 119 to SecState and SecDef, "Civic Action," 18 Dec 61, Att to JCS 1735/627, 26 Dec 61; (S) Memo, Dep Dir Mil Asst to DJS, 2 Feb 62, Encl A to JCS 1735/635, same date; JMF 3310 (18 Dec 61).

11. (S) JCSM-107-62 to SecDef, 10 Feb 62 (derived from JCS 1735/636); same file.

12. Team members were drawn from State, Defense (two colonels), CIA, AID, and FBI.

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see [Latin military establishments shifted away from major cities and out of their traditional political roles. But internal security should come first, civic action second. Latins lacked the capability for converting conventional units into internal security forces and, simultaneously, diverting substantial resources to civic action. Finally, the team recommended revision of the entire US military program in Latin America--force structures, bilateral treaties, intelligence efforts, missions, and MAAGs--in order to emphasize internal security and consolidate the supervisory authority for such programs.¹³]

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(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff readily agreed with the team about the need for increased internal security assistance and more coordinated executive guidance. But they opposed any wholesale revision of the US military program. A recent consolidation of Service Missions with MAAGs should alleviate some of the difficulties. As for bilateral agreements, they feared that the United States might lose more in renegotiation than it would gain. Lastly, they criticized the team for failing to stress sufficiently the importance of civic action programs and military participation therein. Subsequently, ISA reviewed bilateral agreements and concluded that no revisions were needed. Otherwise, however, ISA endorsed all the teams' proposals, including the proposition that military

13. (TS) "Mission to South America - South American Assessment Team," 3 Jan 62, Att to JCS 1976/405, 6 Feb 62; JMF 9130 (3 Jan 62) sec 2. Conclusions are summarized in (S) Encl B to JCS 1976/419, 2 Mar 62, same file.

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participation in civic action received a lower priority than internal security.¹⁴

(S) [On 26 March 1962, President Kennedy approved a policy guidance statement that the State Department had prepared in response to NSAM No. 118. Its essence was that the Latin military should be encouraged to reorient their establishments so as to: maintain security against subversion and guerrilla warfare; rely largely upon US forces for dealing with external aggression; contribute to ASW defense and to collective action by the Organization of American States; and encourage standardization along US lines. US military aid programs should: appeal to non-communist civilians; provide, wherever possible, some visible economic benefits; and acquaint the Latin military with communist techniques for discrediting them in the eyes of the populace.¹⁵]

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(U) All this while, President Kennedy kept pressing for additional actions. In February 1962, during a briefing on the Alliance for Progress, he voiced concern about the relatively modest MAP for Latin American and asked, "Why not more?" The Chairman's Assistant, Major General T. W. Parker, suggested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff tell CINCs and Missions to take the initiative in encouraging participation by the

14. (S) JCSM-187-62 to SecDef, 14 Mar 62 (derived from JCS 1976/419); JMF 9130/3100 (3 Jan 62) sec 3. (S) Ltr, DASD(ISA) to DepUSecState U. A. Johnson, 16 Mar 62, Att to M/H of JCS 1976/419, 23 Mar 62; same file, sec 2.

15. (S) NSAM No. 140 to SecState and SecDef, 26 Mar 62, Att to JCS 1976/433, 30 Mar 62; JMF 9122/905 (30 Oct 61) sec 5.

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Latin armed forces in civic action projects. On 14 March, such a message was sent to CINCLANT and CINCARIB.¹⁶

(U) By this time, concrete projects were taking shape. In April 1962, General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, presented OSD with a Civic Action Plan for Ecuador costing about \$1.5 million. Phase I involved primarily road building and water supply; Phase II emphasized school construction, water supply, and public health; Phase III stressed colonization, advanced agriculture, and education. Phase I alone would involve 41 US military personnel, 250 Ecuadorian military, and 4,950 civilian volunteers. Mr. Gilpatric approved the plan, and agreed that funds would come from the FY 1962 MAP. Significantly, he assigned this program a "worldwide priority over all MAP and Army claimants."¹⁷

(S) Concurrently, the Country Team in Bolivia urged US support for a pilot Civilian Conservation Corps, similar to the New Deal program of the 1930s, to spur development and cut unemployment. Secretary of State Dean Rusk endorsed the idea, and recommended that funds be drawn from MAP. The Joint Chiefs of Staff

16. (U) JCS 1976/420, 6 Mar 62; (U) Msg, JS 3623 to CINCLANT and CINCARIB, 14 Mar 62 (derived from JCS 1976/420); JMF 9122/9105 (30 Oct 61) sec 5. JCS 3623 cited military information and education programs as a field for increased action. In reply, CINCARIB described one possibly insuperable obstacle--namely, that the target was uneducated or illiterate conscripts, to whom written material would be incomprehensible. (U) Ltr, CINCARIB to JCS, 18 Mar 62, Att to JCS 1976/451, 28 May 62; same file, sec 6.

17. (U) CM-671-62 to SecDef, 28 Apr 62, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 1976/444, 8 May 62; (U) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 8 May 62, Att to JCS 1976/446, 11 May 62; JMF 9138.2/3700 (26 Apr 62) sec 1. Subsequently, CINCARIB sent the JCS bi-monthly status reports on these projects.

18. (U) JCS 1976/444, 8 May 62, Att to JCS 1976/446, 11 May 62, sec 1.

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also approved, but asked that appropriations be acquired either from other sources or through a MAP increase. Ultimately, however, the Defense Department authorized and funded CCC projects in Bolivia and El Salvador.¹⁸

(S) In September 1962, Secretary McNamara flew to the Panama Canal Zone and conferred with CINCARIB (Lieutenant General Andrew P. O'Meara, USA); also in attendance were General Lemnitzer, Major General Victor Krulak, SACSA, and the Director of Military Assistance, General Robert J. Wood. In his presentation, General O'Meara stressed that the chief problem was Congress' \$57.5 million MAP ceiling. And, he asserted, there were limits upon how far the [Latin military could be prodded into civic action; the officer corps would dissipate neither its capacity for maintaining law and order nor its ability to exert pressure upon rulers whom they considered dangerous.] He acknowledged that, if the \$57.5 million was allotted entirely to internal security and civic action, internal security requirements for all countries could be met by FY 1966. But the United States was heavily involved in ASW programs; these would have to be augmented (\$12.5 million was presently planned) in order to receive a return on earlier investments. Also, CINCARIB added, [suspension of ASW support would be risky because the Latin navies wielded considerable political power.] As the conference concluded, Mr. McNamara agreed to consider civic

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¹⁸. (S) JCSM-652-62 to SecDef, 24 Aug 62 (derived from JCS 1976/467), JMF 9122/9105 (30 Oct 61) sec 7. DOD approval is mentioned in comments on paragraphs 16 and 23 of (U) Memo, DASD(ISA) to McGeorge Bundy, 17 Dec 62, Att to N/H of JCS 1976/472, 26 Dec 62; same file.

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action projects approximating \$3 million for the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia, Bolivia, and Chile. The Chairman subsequently recommended, and the Secretary approved, projects requiring \$3.417 million in DOD and \$1.2 million in AID funds.¹⁹

(S) Thus, by the autumn of 1962, substantial progress could be seen. Action had begun, for example, on 39 of the 46 projects recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in January. In the [internal security field, 400 men from the 7th Special Forces Group were being sent to Caribbean Command; they would be split into 30 mobile training teams. The Air Force had dispatched its 1st Air Commando Group (8 planes, 80 personnel) to the Canal Zone, where it was training Honduran pilots. US Army Intelligence and Security Advisors were serving in twelve countries.] In the area of hemisphere defense, US-Latin commanders' conferences had become annual events and an Inter-American Defense College was about to open. As to economic development, military services in all Latin countries were participating in civic action projects.²⁰

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(S) On 27 February 1963, a State-Defense-AID message went to CINCARIB and the various Embassies explaining that internal security and civic action were now MAP's primary purposes. The Latins, apparently, were slow

19. (S) Ltr, CINCARIB to JCS, 26 Sep 62, Att to JCS 1976/478, 3 Oct 62; (U) CM-12-62 to SecDef, 10 Oct 62, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 1976/478, 11 Oct 62; (U) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 27 Oct 62, Encl to JCS 1735/675, 31 Oct 62; JMF 3700 (5 Oct 62) sec 2.

20. (S) JCSM-704-62 to SecDef, 13 Sep 62 (derived from JCS 1976/402); JMF 9111/9105 (30 Oct 61) sec 8.

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to understand this shift in emphasis. Accordingly, in May, the State Department drafted guidance that US officials could use in explaining the program. ISA, thinking that some of State's language might intensify Latin misgivings, wrote a revision intended to make clear that increased internal security would allow the Latin military to contribute more effectively to hemisphere defense. The Joint Chiefs of Staff asked, in addition, that ASW requirements be accorded recognition.²¹

(C) [In April 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson issued an important group of MAP guidelines for Latin America. First, he instructed, a nation's military expenditures should be "consistent with and proportionate to expenditures for social and economic development." Second, a country's military establishment ought to be "realistic in terms of our estimate of its potential missions" and contain "elite units which might be used in U.N. peace-keeping missions." Third, there should be "continued emphasis on civic action and internal security missions," a "clear relationship between military internal security missions and police functions," and emphasis on the military's role "in a modern democratic society." Fourth, and potentially most significant, the U.S. Government should not only avoid grant or sale of "sophisticated and expensive"]

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21. (S) JCS 1976/511-1, 7 May 63; (S) Memo, ASD(ISA) to DJS, 7 May 63, Att to JCS 1976/511, same date; (S) JCSM-363-63 to SecDef, 10 May 63 (derived from JCS 1976/511-1); JMF 9122/4060 (7 May 63). For subsequent JCS protests against any slighting of ASW efforts, see: (S) JCSM-601-63 to SecDef, 6 Aug 63 (derived from JCS 1976/521); (S) JCSM-734-63 to SecDef, 20 Sep 63 (derived from JCS 1976/521-1); JMF 9122/4060 (25 Jun 63).

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[prestige equipment," except when specifically justified, but also "actively discourage" such purchases from other sources.²²]

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(S) More of [MAP's political potential was explored and exploited] in 1964, after the Brazilian military ousted left-leaning President Joao Goulart and put General Castello Branco in his place.²³ The State Department, the Special Group (CI), and ISA all favored some prompt expression of US support for the new regime. ISA wanted MAP raised from \$9.8 to \$12.5 million; the US Ambassador advocated an increase to \$20 million. The Joint Chiefs of Staff presented a more complicated position. They dismissed ISA's proposal as too small to demonstrate US support and likely to offend Brazilian sensibilities. And, since Congress had set a \$55 million ceiling on material aid for Latin American, there would have to be compensating cuts in other country programs--a process that would disrupt orderly planning, deprive countries of critical assets, and shake their confidence in US reliability. Therefore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that "an

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22. (C-GP 1) NSAM No. 297 to SecDef et al., "Latin American Military Aid," 22 Apr 64, Att to JCS 2315/322, 30 Apr 64, JMF 9122/4060 (22 Apr 64). Unfortunately, U.S. efforts to discourage jet aircraft purchases proved an almost complete failure. Latin governments found willing sellers in Western Europe.

23. Early in 1962, CINCARIB had told Secretary McNamara that Communists occupied key positions in the Brazilian Army and government, and that the country might go Communist in three years. (S) Memo for Record by CAPT G. M. Cunha, "Report of Conference--Caribbean Command," 5 Feb 62; JMF 5410 (20 Jan 62).

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early and strong effort" be made either to remove the \$55 million ceiling or raise it to \$75 million. Once that was done, a \$20 million Brazilian program should be approved for planning purposes. Credit assistance and cost-sharing proposals also ought to be prepared at an early date. In October 1964, the Administration approved a grant aid program of \$11.8 million and contemplated credit assistance sales totaling \$8-10 million.²⁴

(S) Late in 1964, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President, tasked the Defense Department with drafting a new U.S. strategy for dealing with Latin American military forces. ISA proposed an orderly phase-out of all grant aid, to be replaced by selective "project aid" designed either to equip a specific force for a fixed period or to implement a specific program for a fixed sum. In the internal security area, ISA saw no need for "major restructuring" of Latin establishments. As to whether the concept of hemispheric defense remained valid, ISA argued that U.S. assistance for ASW programs flowed "primarily" from the need to maintain friendly relations with Latin navies. But, the Joint Chiefs of Staff replied, "the shaky economies of these countries and the continuing insurgent threat will not permit any sizeable shift from grant aid to military sales in the near future." They insisted, too, that Latin ASW forces did serve a real need, since no U.S. units could

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24. (S) Memo, DASD(ISA) to DJS, 12 Oct 64, Att to JCS 2315/388, 15 Oct 64; (U) JCSM-896-64 to SecDef, 22 Oct 64 (derived from JCS 2315/338-1); (S) Msg, DEF 1399 to USCINCSO, 28 Oct 64; JMF 4060 (12 Oct 64).

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[be spared to protect South American convoys during wartime.²⁵]

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(C) In June 1965, Secretary McNamara sent Mr. Bundy a revised study proposing a phase-out by FY 1971 of grant MAP, except for training support, and introduction of a sales and credits program. He recommended that this strategy "be regarded as a long-term goal, but one which must be approached without a rigid time frame." Similarly, the State Department supported these proposals "in principle," but urged [indefinite delay on grounds that immediate implementation would "disrupt" U.S. influence and possibly alienate those Latin military forces upon whom the Alliance for Progress had to rely as preservers of stability.²⁶]

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(U) To talk about Latin America without discussing Cuba would, of course, be rather like performing "Hamlet" without the Prince. On 20 November 1962, as the great Soviet-American confrontation ended, President Kennedy stated that:

if all offensive weapons are removed from Cuba, and if Cuba is not used for the export of aggressive Communist purposes, there will be peace in the Caribbean.²⁷

25. (S) Memo, McGeorge Bundy to SecDef et al., 26 Oct 64, Att to JCS 2315/339, 28 Oct 64; (S) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS et al., 13 Jan 65, Att to JCS 2315/339-2, 15 Jan 65; (U) JCSM-64-65 to SecDef, 27 Jan 65 (derived from JCS 2315/339-2); JMF 9105 (26 Oct 64) sec 1.

26. (C) Memo, SecDef to McGeorge Bundy, 11 Jan 65, Att to JCS 2315/339-4, 15 Jun 65; same file, sec 2.

27. Public Papers: Kennedy, 1962, p. 831

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(S) The nature of this "peace" proved decidedly curious. On 8 January 1963, the Chief Executive approved creation of an Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on Cuba, chaired by Mr. Sterling Cottrell of the State Department. Secretary of the Army Cyrus Vance became Mr. McNamara's executive agent on all Cuban matters; General Earl G. Wheeler, who had become Chief of Staff of the Army in October 1963, acted as JCS representative. Mr. Cottrell quickly circulated a draft paper on future US policy that described [Castro's overthrow as the Administration's "ultimate objective" but sketched less ambitious "immediate objectives" of isolating Cuba, weakening it economically, promoting internal dissension, eroding Castro's domestic support, frustrating his subversive activities, negating his hemispheric influence, and increasing the cost to the Soviet Bloc of sustaining Cuba.] The Joint Chiefs of Staff thought this acceptable as "broad guidance." Mr. Vance, however, objected that the paper had not made clear whether the Administration intended "actively and boldly" to pursue the "ultimate" objective or whether it would "adopt a substantially less active policy." If the former, the policy statement should say that the United States would ["apply increasing degrees of political, economic, psychological and military pressures until the Castro/Communist regime is overthrown."] If the latter, it should speak simply of being "prepared, as appropriate opportunities present themselves," to do these things. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, unsurprisingly, urged adoption of the former course, and recommended that repeated low-level

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reconnaissance flights over Cuba be included among the possible courses of action.²⁸

(S) On 20 January, Mr. Cottrell circulated a revised paper in which he proposed to "first apply all feasible . . . pressures . . . in order to create propitious conditions in Cuba for further advance to the objective of removing Communist regimes from Cuba." He opposed the more drastic alternative because "we should not set ourselves on a single track which propels us into an invasion regardless of unforeseen international consequences." The Joint Chiefs of Staff reaffirmed their preference for more drastic actions. Finally, Mr.

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Cottrell submitted the following list of policy objectives to the NSC Executive Committee:

- a. Protecting US and hemispheric security by assuring against the reintroduction of offensive weapons.
- b. Removing the remaining Soviet forces from Cuba.
- c. Preventing Cuba from undertaking aggressive military action against other Caribbean states.
- d. Reducing the Castro regime's capabilities for supporting subversion and insurrection.
- e. Supporting developments within Cuba that offered the possibility of either divorcing the regime from Sino-Soviet purposes or replacing it with a non-Communist government.]

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NSAM 213
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28. (S) NSAM No. 213 to SecState, 8 Jan 63, Encl to JCS 2304/134, 9 Jan 63; (C) Memo, SecArmy to Chmn, ICC, 11 Jan 63, Encl to 1st N/H of JCS 2304/134, 14 Jan 63; (C) 2d N/H of JCS 2304/134, 29 Jan 63; (S) Memo, LTC Fairfield to SJCS, 14 Jan 63, Att to JCS 2304/135, 15 Jan 63; (S) JCSM-54-63 to SecArmy, 16 Jan 63 (derived from JCS 2304/136); (S) CSAM-19-63 to JCS, 17 Jan 63, Encl to JCS 2304/138, same date; (S) JCSM-67-63 to SecArmy, 19 Jan 63, Encl to JCS 2304/138; JMF 9123/3100 (8 Jan 63) sec 1.

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f. Maximizing the cost to Moscow of supporting Castro.

g. Intensifying Castro's political isolation, especially from Latin American states.

h. Preparing for a wide variety of military contingencies.

The Executive Committee discussed this paper on 24 January, but came to no decision.²⁹

(S) In the autumn of 1963, agencies reviewed programs that might place additional strains upon Castro. One possibility involved the [monitoring of aircraft that could be carrying arms from Cuba to other Caribbean countries. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in mid-November, advised against any "operational commitments" because: the actual occurrence of such flights had not been confirmed; the cost in US resources would be disproportionate to the gain; and there was no assurance of cooperation by Latin states.] The Defense Department, accordingly, adopted this position. But, at that point, the discovery in Venezuela of a sizeable arms cache, proven to have come from Cuba, changed

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^{29.} (S) CSAM 23-63 to JCS, 20 Jan 63, Att to JCS 2304/140, same date; (TS) Memo, Coord of Cuban Affairs to NSC Ex Comm, "United States Policy Toward Cuba," 23 Jan 63; same file, sec 2. The 24 January meeting is mentioned in (TS) DM-353-64 to CJCS, 28 Feb 64; JMF 9123 (18 Feb 64) (2). (TS) Subsequently, when plans were being prepared for supporting a spontaneous uprising, the Joint Chiefs of Staff seemed particularly anxious to avoid the sort of errors that had contributed to the Bay of Pigs debacle (e.g., reliance upon limited sources of intelligence and restrictions upon the use of air power). See, for example, (TS) JCSM-809-63 to SecDef, 21 Oct 63, Encl A to JCS 2304/205-1; JMF 9123/3100 (1 Oct 63) sec 1. (TS) JCSM-458-63 to SecDef, 15 Jun 63, Encl A to JCS 2304/197; JMF 9123/3100 (19 Feb 63) sec 4.

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matters completely. Mr. Vance asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to propose plans for air-sea surveillance. Answering in mid-January 1964, they advocated a "flexible combination of barrier at destination, with emphasis on Colombia and Venezuela, plus air reconnaissance in waters south of Cuba to identify vessels exiting from Cuba." They calculated US force requirements as: 1 carrier, 14 destroyers, 1 oiler, and 23 patrol planes for sea surveillance; and 1 fighter squadron and 1 airborne early warning squadron for air surveillance. On 20 January, they and Secretary McNamara charged CINCLANT with monitoring all ship movements into Venezuela, in order to obtain a sampling of shipping density. This was done over 24-31 January, using two destroyer escorts and 55 flights.³⁰ CINCLANT concluded that, although surveillance could be accomplished, boarding and searching all ships would be such a daunting task that firm intelligence about subversion traffic was absolutely vital. On 17 February, CINCLANT outlined before Secretary McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff a scheme for disrupting Cuban arms traffic; they promptly approved it, as the basis for a detailed plan.³¹ Caribbean countries now

30. Embarrassment arose when the Venezuelans, who had not been informed of these efforts, threatened to shoot or force down US aircraft that intruded into their zone of interest during 27-29 January.

31. (C) CM-988-63 to DJS, 22 Oct 63, Encl to JCS 2304/207, 23 Oct 63; (C) JCSM-888-63 to SecDef, 19 Nov 63, Encl to JCS 2304/207-1; (C) Memo, SecArmy to CJCS, 2 Dec 63, Encl to JCS 2304/207-2, 4 Dec 63; (C) Memo, SecArmy to CJCS, 13 Dec 63, Att to JCS 2304/207-3, 16 Dec 63; JMF 9123/3100 (22 Oct 63) (1) sec 1. (S) JCSM-34-64 to SecDef, 16 Jan 64 (derived from JCS 2304/207-4); (C) Ltr, CINCLANT to JCS, 5 Feb 64, Att to JCS 1976/533, 7 Feb 64; (C) CM-1192-64 to SecDef, 15 Feb 64, Att to JCS 2396/6, 20 Feb 64; (S) Msg, JCS 4914 to CINCLANT, 18 Feb 64; same file, sec 3.

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were willing to assist US efforts. On 26 July, the Organization of American States by vote of 15-4 condemned Cuba "for its acts of aggression and of intervention against . . . Venezuela," and agreed to suspend normal trade and diplomatic relations.³²

(TS) What, meanwhile, was the United States doing to undermine Castro's control over Cuba? In December 1963, soon after he assumed Office, President Johnson voiced reluctance at undertaking [high-risk sabotage and harassment actions] from fear that they might jeopardize efforts (1) to obtain OAS agreement on anti-Cuban actions, and (2) to achieve further reductions among the Soviet military personnel in Cuba. Still, when the Joint Chiefs of Staff conferred with him on 4 March 1964, the President asked them for a list of measures that might add to Castro's troubles. Major General R. H. Anthis, SACSA, recommended additional actions that included: [clandestine biological attacks against sea traffic with Cuba; destruction of Cuba's sugar crop and covert attacks against her sugar industry; and sabotage of vessels and commodities involved in trade with Cuba. General Wheeler circulated a draft memorandum recommending resumption and intensification of: covert intelligence collection; propaganda; economic denial; and covert sabotage, directed primarily against Cuba's sugar industry and foreign trade.] Further expansion of these efforts would depend upon Cuban and world reactions. General Curtis E LeMay, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, more explicitly, insisted that Castro's elimination must be "the primary US objective The longer we refrain from positive

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32. Dept of State Bulletin, 10 Aug 64, pp. 179-184. The cooperation of Trinidad-Tobago in anti-Castro surveillance is recorded in JMF 9123 (18 Feb 64).

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measures against the Castro regime, including direct military action if necessary, the more inflammatory the situation throughout Latin America will become." Therefore, he proposed saying

The Joint Chief of Staff believe that the ultimate US objective toward Cuba should be to establish a government in Cuba that is acceptable to the US. Should it become apparent within the near future that . . . [approved actions] do not meet this objective, then these actions should be intensified and broadened with a view to establishing a basis for appropriate military action.

Finally, General Maxwell D. Taylor, who had been Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since October 1962, circulated a draft that, with minor additions, won JCS approval. In this memorandum, which went to the White House on 21 March, they recommended

a resumption of the program . . . involving the employment of [Covert assets to conduct interdependent operations, including the covert collection of intelligence, propaganda actions, economic denial actions, and externally-mounted sabotage operations against Cuba.] As this program unfolds, they would favor expanding and intensifying it while maintaining a continuing evaluation of the reaction of Castro, the communists, and the Free World. . . .

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The Joint Chiefs of Staff continue to believe that the ultimate United States objective toward Cuba must be to establish a government in Cuba that is acceptable to the United States. However, they have difficulty identifying promising actions

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against Castro which have not been previously considered, and in some cases tried. It is a hard fact that little remains which offer promise of real effectiveness in removing Castro short of a blockade or an ascending scale of military action up to or including invasion. They will keep this problem under continuing review and advise you should any new and promising³³ courses of action be uncovered.

(U) So, for the remainder of the 1960s, something of a stalemate persisted. Fidel Castro continued to control Cuba, but he made few converts in Latin America. Nowhere did Communist-inspired guerrilla campaigns gain momentum. The gravest peril appeared in Boliva, where Castro's lieutenant Ernesto "Che" Guevara failed completely; in 1967, he was captured and killed. Thus, in the Western Hemisphere, counter-insurgency must be counted a success.³⁴

³³. (TS) Memo for Record by CSA, "Meeting with the President on Cuba, 1100 hours, 19 Dec 63"; CJCS 031.1 Meeting with President. (S) Memo, Actg CJCS to DJS, 6 Mar 64, Att to JCS 2304/218, same date; (TS) CSAM-159-64 to JCS, 22 Mar 64; (S) CSAFM-243-64 to JCS, 11 Mar 64; (TS) Chms's Flimsy 128-64 to JCS, 18 Mar 64; (TS) JCSM-253-64 to President, 21 Mar 64, Encl to JCS 2304/218-3; JMF 9123 (6 Mar 64). In November, the JCS sent Secretary McNamara a plan for attacking the sugar industry which, they thought, merited "serious consideration." (TS) JCSM-942-64 to SecDef, 9 Nov 64, (derived from JCS 2304/244-1); JMF 9123 (1 Sep 64).

³⁴. See Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era, pp. 279-286