

THE COLD WAR AND US-GUATEMALAN RELATIONS
DURING THE 1960'S

A Thesis

by

DAVID BRENNAN TOMLINS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

August 2011

Major Subject: History

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ABSTRACT

The Cold War and US-Guatemalan Relations During the 1960's. (August 2011)

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During the 1960's Guatemalan stability began to falter due to a political and social breakdown; guerilla violence and government repression emerged from this decade as common occurrences. In response to the instability within Guatemala, the US focused on providing significant financial aid to bolster a weak economy, while simultaneously working with the Guatemalan police and military to create more efficient and modern internal security forces capable of combating Communist subversion. Despite US attempts to foster stability, in 1963 President Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes was removed from office by a military coup organized by his opponents within Guatemala.

The Lyndon B. Johnson administration continued to support the Guatemalan government and continued to provide economic and military assistance. Despite US assistance, the internal social and political divisions in Guatemala continued to result in violence. In the midst of the escalating violence, elections were held in 1966 and the center left candidate Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro was elected as the new president of Guatemala. The election of a politically left president further radicalized the Guatemalan right, which resulted in attempted coups and acts of terror. The violence from the leftist guerillas and the radical rightist elements forced Mendez Montenegro to

allow the military to use harsh counter-terror strategies to bring the country under control. Despite negative developments, the US consistently tried to help build Guatemalan stability. Unfortunately, its policies ignored the socio-economic inequalities, and internal division which was the biggest problem facing the nation. The internal political division that created the violence and instability made it impossible for any US assistance to have a meaningful impact. During the 1960's these developments in Guatemala paved the way for the violence and genocide of the 1980's and solidified a policy of US involvement that was inadequate and ineffective.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Guatemala sits atop Central America at the southern tip of Mexico. A country slightly smaller than Tennessee, marked by volcanoes and lush tropical jungles along the Pacific coastline, to the north the mountainous highlands reach nearly 4,000 meters into the sky. Within this landscape, there is a large indigenous population with a rich culture and history. Nevertheless, the natural beauty of Guatemala disguises the important fact that under an attractive landscape, problems abound. During the last half of the 20th century, Guatemala was in a continuous state of crisis. Starting in 1954 with a military coup, rebellions, assassinations, guerilla warfare, state-sponsored mass murder, and political chaos became the norm in Guatemalan society and politics. Only in the 1990's did a small measure of peace and stability develop. From 1960 to 1996, 200,000 Guatemalan citizens died. While there was state-sponsored violence and upheaval in many parts of Latin America during the 20th century, the Guatemalan "Violencia" was the worst.¹

This period of violence was inaugurated in 1954 by a coup against Jacobo Arbenz the legitimate President of Guatemala aided by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). That coup more than any other subject in Guatemalan history has received extensive attention from US scholars. The events that followed this period, however,

This thesis follows the style of the journal *Diplomatic History*.

¹ The death count is generally agreed on by most of the authors, fluctuating from 100,000 to 250,000 casualties, the 200,000 death statistic is verified by the Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification, *Guatemala Memory of Silence: report of the Commission for Historical Clarification, conclusions and recommendations*, <http://shr.aaas.org/guatemala/ceh/report/english/toc.html> (accessed February 27, 2011).

have yet to be examined in detail. This thesis will examine many of the important early events of what has been called the Guatemalan Civil War. The roots of the conflict clearly lay with the 1954 coup and the inequalities in Guatemalan society; however during the 1960's guerilla movements emerged, military control over the government became highly visible, and counter-revolutionary groups became major political actors. This thesis will also explore the issue of US-Guatemalan relations during the 1960's, in particular US financial aid, military assistance, and training. During the hottest period of the Cold War, when Latin America was receiving the most attention, Guatemala, a nation the US had already invested in through intervention, received only the minimum of assistance and action necessary to maintain a pro-US government in power. The ineffectiveness of US assistance in helping build a stronger Guatemalan economy and more stable nation was shocking considering the fear of communist takeover in Latin America. Yet, the example of Guatemala exposes the realities of US-Latin American relations during the Cold War better than more extreme examples, like Cuba, Chile, and Brazil. The following pages will lay the groundwork for the rest of the thesis by describing the historical background of the region and Guatemala itself.

The story of modern Guatemala began with the Latin American republics gaining independence from Spain. The Kingdom of Guatemala was composed of the modern countries Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. Before independence from Spain, this region was loosely under the control of the viceroyalty of New Spain. The Viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru were the colonial centers for the

Spaniards. The Kingdom of Guatemala was far removed from those areas and had no major population centers, no gold, silver, or sugar, it was not until coffee and bananas became popular that Guatemala had a successful resource to export. It had therefore attracted fewer Spanish settlers and the indigenous population and mestizos had a greater role in society than in other regions of Latin America. The greater percentage of indigenous peoples created a situation where the majority of the population were limited in their political and social power. The division between those of Indian and Spanish descent would continue through the 20th century. In January of 1822, Central America gained freedom from Spanish rule but was incorporated into the Mexican empire. Brigadier General Vicente Filisola and his army used military force to solidify Mexican control over Central America, but in March of 1823 Emperor Agustín I was overthrown and Filisola called for a Central American congress. After a brief period of turmoil, the congress met in Guatemala City on June 24th 1823 and formed a federal government. However, the Conservative and Liberal ideological conflict caused a breakdown in government and a civil war that lasted from 1826-1829. The Liberal Party emerged from the conflict in power with Francisco Morazán leading the Central American Federation.² The federation gradually fell apart due to internal pressure. By 1840 it had ceased to exist.³

² Thomas L. Karnes, *The Failure Of Union* (Chapel Hill, 1961), is a good summary of the events surrounding the independence period and a frequently cited work in English. Alberto Herrarte, *La Union De Centro America* (Guatemala, 1963) is also a good broad survey of the major events.

³ Unlike many areas of study, there is no one classic summary of Guatemalan history. The following are good concise summaries of Central American history, Edelberto Torres Rivas, *History, and Society in Central America* (Austin, 1993); Hector Perez-Brignoli, *A Brief History of Central America* (Berkeley, 1985).

Rafael Carrera, the nation's first caudillo, overthrew Francisco Morazán and the Central American Federation shortly after independence from Spain.⁴ Following the collapse of the Central American Federation, the modern nations of Central America emerged, and began the arduous process of forming and maintaining national governments. In Guatemala, this took the form of dictatorial rule. For a brief period after Carrera's death in 1865, there was the possibility of democratic elections, but in 1871 Justo Rufino Barrios who represented the Liberal political party took control and would hold onto power until 1885. After another brief period of transition when the presidency shifted between several weak presidents for 13 years, Manuel Estrada Cabrera took over from 1898-1920.

Estrada Cabrera's role in creating strong national ties with the United Fruit Company (UFCO) was of particular importance. The interest of US companies in Central America had a profound economic impact on Guatemala. This powerful influence began to develop around 1870 with the rise of Liberals to political power. And at this time Central American countries began to develop export-oriented economies. The growth of US business in Central America was linked to two specific commodities industries coffee, and bananas. Through various US companies' these commodities were exported to the United States, yet in order to do this effectively and on a large scale many companies became powerful political forces in their own right, influencing national policies and building infrastructure.

⁴ Ralph Lee Woodward Jr., *Rafael Carrera and The Emergence Of The Republic Of Guatemala 1821-1871* (Athens, 1993), is a thorough biography of Guatemala's first dictator.

The case of Guatemala exemplifies US foreign policy in Central America and the Caribbean. During the first half of the 20th century, US-Latin American relations were dominated by business interests in the region. President Taft's "Dollar Diplomacy" set forth the policy that it was better to try and influence Latin America through loans and foreign investment rather than outright intervention. Through these businesses the fate of both North and South America became intertwined. As Paul Dosal describes in *Doing Business with the Dictators* US corporations like UFCO became integrated into the social structure of Central America. Not only was UFCO the largest employer in Guatemala it was also the largest private landowner. Through its connections with the regimes of Estrada Cabrera and Jorge Ubico (1931-1944) the corporation exerted significant political influence to its own advantage, this interaction was mirrored throughout the region. In Honduras, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba, US business and policies shaped these young nations. In the Caribbean and Central America US business and national governments developed intimate ties, each aiding the other in the process of maintaining power over the region. The United Fruit Company, Standard Fruit, as well as other less powerful companies shaped a Central American economic system based upon dependency.⁵

US-Latin American relations in the early 20th century were also shaped by military intervention. While "Dollar Diplomacy" was supposed to emphasize economics, US marines were still deployed throughout the Caribbean and Central America. In 1912 marines were deployed to Nicaragua in order to help maintain a favorable government.

⁵ Paul J. Dosal, *Doing Business With The Dictators: a political history of United Fruit in Guatemala, 1899-1944* (Wilmington, 1993), P.1-13.

In 1916 marines landed in the Dominican Republic to instill order and put an end to the political upheaval the nation was experiencing. In contrast to these examples, Guatemala was one of the few nations that did not experience a military intervention during the early 20th century. This was due primarily to the fact that dictatorial control of the country and foreign businesses interests were never challenged. The strength of conservative institutions and elite control in Guatemala was stronger than in any other country in the region; those institutions maintained the status quo while other nations were growing and developing. Guatemala never had to deal with the inevitable upheaval that follows change, and remained stable during the first half of the 20th century. World War One further integrated the Latin American economies into a world system. However due to the increased integration, when the world economy collapsed in the Great Depression so too did the economies of Latin America. Jorge Ubico was the last of the traditional caudillos to control Guatemala. The long domination of Guatemala by internal elites and foreign companies was supposed to end in 1944 with the overthrow of Ubico and the subsequent election of President Juan Jose Arevalo, who began a ten-year period of democratic reform.⁶

An important historical reality that shaped Guatemalan history throughout these events and into the 20th century was internal social and political division. A relatively small class of elites rose to power in the 19th century. The conservative elites dominated society and politics, while the rest of the population was marginalized. Nineteen of the

⁶ Don M. Coerver and Linda B. Hall, *Tangled Destinies: Latin America and the United States* (Albuquerque, 1999), is an excellent overview of US Latin American relations.

twenty leading families in Guatemala became prominent in the 1800's and remained in positions of power through the 20th century.⁷ The success of a small number of elite families early in the history of this nation established a precedent of elite control. The distribution of land and wealth was extremely unequal in Guatemala. In 1950, 2% of the landowners controlled 70% of the country's farmland. The control of land was of particular importance because Guatemala was a predominantly rural society. During the 1960's over 65% of the population was actively involved in agriculture.⁸ Because of the unequal distribution of land and the agricultural dependence of the most of the population, the elites who owned land had complete control over the livelihoods of everyone else.

On the other end of the social spectrum were the indigenous Maya. In 1950, 53% of the population was indigenous. While that number declined over time to 43% in 1964, the distribution of the population favored indigenous power in rural Guatemala. The population was not distributed evenly, the Peten and Zacapa regions to the North East were very sparsely populated, the indigenous population was concentrated throughout the North Western highlands. The industrial and political center of the country was Guatemala City; which was the largest population center.⁹ While the indigenous population was in a majority for most of the nations history, it did not have the political

⁷ "Guatemala's Bourgeoisie," in *Guatemala*, ed. Susanne Jonas and David Tobis, 210-251 (North American Congress on Latin America, 1974).

⁸ Brian Loveman and Thomas Davies, "Guatemala Case Study," in *Guerilla Warfare*, 181-208 (Wilmington, 1997).

⁹ Richard Adams, *Cruxification by Power: essays on Guatemalan national social structure, 1944- 1966* (Austin, 1970).

or economic power to make an impact on the national level.¹⁰ The stratification of Guatemalan society hurt the indigenous population most; they were excluded from society and had few possibilities for improvement. This stratification developed out of the exclusionary system employed by the Spanish, who had a complicated racial hierarchy, which influenced the creation of social classes. The social system, which developed in Guatemala, resulted in the indigenous populations isolation from Guatemalan society as a whole and their subservience to those with more land and political power. These divisions were made worse by some of the poorest economic and social conditions in the region.¹¹ These social divisions carried over to the political spectrum dividing those who wanted to maintain the status quo of elite control and those who wanted to work toward reform and improve conditions for the masses. Guatemala was struggling to resolve these issues when the US destabilized the region through its intervention in 1954.

Following World War Two the tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States grew, creating a global standoff between these two superpowers. Europe was divided between east and west; the US in an attempt to stem Soviet expansion adopted the policy of containment. This military/ political strategy emphasized limiting the spread of communism to new countries in order to prevent a domino effect from

¹⁰ Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala: a History of Race and Nation*, describes the political power that indigenous elite were able to mobilize, but their impact was minimal by the 1960's.

¹¹ United Nations, *UNdata: a world of information*, 2011, <http://data.un.org/> (accessed May 16, 2011), the data only goes back to the 1950's but illustrates Guatemala's GDP growth % was consistently less than other Central American countries, and its infant mortality rate, a traditional marker of national poverty, was above the regional average.

occurring. Economic and military assistance was provided to Europe and Asia to ensure this goal. While this conflict originated in Europe and escalated due to disputes in Korea; by the 1950's Latin America became involved. The fear of possible communist expansion into the western hemisphere motivated the US to help overthrow the president of Guatemala, Arevalo's successor, Jacobo Arbenz.¹²

The 1954 coup was the major turning point in modern Guatemalan history, as such any story on modern Guatemala must start here. For the US, it was a moment when democracy triumphed over communism, a point where the CIA came in to their own as global players. However, the people of Guatemala experienced the aftermath of that event in quite a different way. The years following the removal of Jacobo Arbenz were violent and unstable, not just for a short period but for the next 40 years. The assassination of presidents and government officials became regular events along with frequent attempts to overthrow the government by revolutionary guerilla movements, which spread throughout the country. During this period of upheaval, the economy stagnated due to lackluster investment and disorganized planning. The centrality of the 1954 coup to later events necessitates its place at the start of any story on modern Guatemala.¹³

¹² Two important works on the Cold War that provide complete overviews of the period are, Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, The Soviet Union, and The Cold War* (New York, 2007); John Lewis Gaddis, *We Know Now: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997).

¹³ Almost every analysis of the Guatemalan Civil War begins with a discussion of the 1954 coup or the Guatemalan Revolution. George Black, Milton Jamail, and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Garrison Guatemala* (New York, 1984); ed. Jonathan L. Fried, Marvin E. Gettleman, Deborah T. Levenson and Nancy Peckham, *Guatemala in Rebellion: unfinished History* (New York, 1983). The notable exception is Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, he does however cover the period in *The Blood of Guatemala: a History of Race and Nation*, which examines the culture and society of Guatemala from independence in the 19th century to the 1954 coup, that eventually leads to the Civil War.

The growing Central American economies that followed the end of the Second World War gave rise to modernizing political movements all across the region. In Guatemala, this period was referred to as “The Guatemalan Revolution” or “The Ten Years of Spring.” From 1944 to 1954 Guatemala maintained a democratically elected government, which was a monumental achievement for a nation historically run by autocratic caudillos. This government attempted to address many of the long-standing social, political, and economic problems which plagued the nation, and in doing so challenged the established social order and political structure.¹⁴

In May and June of 1944, a military uprising with the assistance of students and urban workers successfully deposed dictator Jorge Ubico and instituted a government headed by a three-man junta. Juan Arevalo was then elected president in 1945. He began the process of reforming Guatemala by attempting to modernize the economy through increasing industrialization and land reform. According to historian Piero Gleijeses 75% of the labor-force was involved in agriculture at the time of the “revolution.” Arevalo attempted to reform rural education, and improve labor codes. However, these actions were met with particular resistance from Guatemalan conservative elites, and from US business interests that felt his actions threatened their investments. The opposition caused by these two forces severely limited the success of Arevalo’s reform attempts.¹⁵

¹⁴ George Black, Milton Jamail, and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Garrison Guatemala*, P. 12.

¹⁵ Richard Adams, *Crucifixion by Power: essays on Guatemalan national social structure, 1944- 1966*, details the social and political developments that occur during the “Guatemalan spring”, pointing out the weakness of Guatemalan society and how its attempts at reform actually progressed. This anthropological analysis illustrates how the reforms of the “revolutionary” period were effective to a degree but this process reinforced the polarization of Guatemalan society.

The events surrounding the death of Major Francisco Arana illustrate the problem of social division that Guatemala's conservatives posed. Major Arana was a key figure in the overthrow of Ubico and held the senior position within the subsequent junta. However, his ambition combined with growing pressure from the conservative elites against the new government gave him an opportunity to try and gain power. He became involved in organizing and threatening a rightist coup attempt, the conclusion of which was a controversial shootout between him and allies of Jacobo Arbenz which resulted in Arana's death. Even during the height of the Guatemalan democratic movement, the factions within the military were pushing back against the liberal reformers, and trying to remove them from power.¹⁶

In 1950, Jacobo Arbenz was elected president of Guatemala, and accelerated the reform movement started by his predecessor, exacerbating the tensions between Left and Right. According to Gleijeses, Arbenz was guilty of three key mistakes; he supported agrarian reform, had ties with the communist party, and did not respect the desires of US businesses. The US interpreted these factors to mean that Arbenz was a communist threat to US interests and the region. The result of this was that the CIA at the behest of President Eisenhower organized a military coup in Guatemala.¹⁷

In 1951, Arbenz legalized the communist party; this radical act polarized public opinion about him. Since the start of the Cold War, it had been standard procedure

¹⁶ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1991), P. 50-71. Gleijeses is now the standard text on the 1954 coup, having replaced other works like Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: the story of the American coup in Guatemala* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1982) and Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: the foreign policy of intervention* (Austin, 1982).

¹⁷ Ibid. P. 144.

throughout Latin America for nations supporting the US to outlaw the communist party. This curried favor with the US and increased the amount of control governments had on internal politics. The legalization of this political party set a very different precedent from that of other nations in the region. This departure from the norm along with Arbenz's personal friendships with members of the PGT (Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo, the Communist Party), which during the Arbenz's administration was a relatively normal political party, damaged his image. Arbenz also employed members of the PGT in his staff and gave them positions in government. This increasing acceptance of Communism in his administration convinced the US that his presidency posed a threat to regional stability.¹⁸

Agrarian reform was also a vital component of Arbenz's platform; by addressing the longstanding problem of Guatemalan inequality he hoped to improve the lives of peasants who for the most part owned no land. Decree 900 was supposed to provide land to 100,000 impoverished peasants by dismantling some of the overly large farms which did not even use most of their land and dividing them up. The decree resulted in the expropriation of large amounts of unused United Fruit Company (UFCO) land. Despite complaints from US companies and conservatives within Guatemala, this moderately successful reform helped the economy and raised the standard of living for many people. This action strongly challenged the established order of Guatemalan society by giving the indigenous peasants hope and possibility for social improvement. While the reform was internally successful, the significant involvement of Communists in its

¹⁸ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*, P. 171-207.

implementation and its effect on US business placed another wedge in the relationship between Arbenz and his conservative opposition as well as the US.¹⁹

US business had long been a factor in Guatemalan history. The UFCO originated as a small US Banana import business, by the early 20th century it had grown into a diversified giant of Central American business. Due to the lack of infrastructure within Central American and Caribbean nations, the corporation had developed rail systems, ports, and telegraph lines to aid in the export of bananas, and purchased large tracts of land for crop production. The result of UFCO's expansion was that it gained a powerful place in the economies and infrastructures of many Latin American nations, in particular Guatemala and Honduras. When the land reform began to threaten UFCO interests in Guatemala the company attempted to argue that their lands were targeted specifically. Despite the fact that the land reforms specifically focused on land that was not being used, the company was not pleased. The Guatemalan government was willing to pay the value of the land as was reported in their tax records, and since the UFCO had been consistently undervalued their land they were only offered three dollars per acre. This amount was significantly less than the seventy-five dollars an acre the company wanted, which further exacerbated the situation. Other companies like International Railways of Central America (a subsidiary of UFCO), and Electric Bond and Share, also claimed grievances over the new laws about wages and working conditions. This anger from US businesses was one of the key factors driving the US towards intervention.²⁰

¹⁹ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*, P. 149-170.

²⁰ George Black, *Garrison Guatemala*, P. 14-15; Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: the story of the American coup in Guatemala*, P. 65-77. Paul Dosal, *Doing Business with the Dictators: a*

The CIA operation code-named PBSUCCESS was the most important factor, which enabled the overthrow of the Arbenz government. A military unit in exile was organized and supplied by CIA handlers in Honduras and Nicaragua, and it was this unit in conjunction with sympathizers in the Guatemalan military that removed Arbenz from office. American planes with American pilots bombed Guatemala City during July of 1954, also putting pressure on the Arbenz regime. President Eisenhower even publicly admitted that the US had been involved in the coup after his term in office was over.²¹ This major Cold War victory was a component of Eisenhower trying to roll back the expansion of Communism. Without CIA assistance the coup would have been far more difficult and maybe impossible to achieve.²² However, it is impossible to say that US involvement was the only key determinant behind the coup, the military support against Arbenz was just as vital. This coup created the conditions in which the Guatemalan Civil War would take place.

Castillo Armas became the president of Guatemala through political deals following the coup. His term as president was marked by dependence on the US, a strong anti-communist program, and a weakening political system. Castillo Armas was a poor leader but he clearly saw his place as with the United States. A great deal of his administration focused on improving things that the US wanted fixed, namely putting an end to the communist threat and fixing the weak economic environment that hurt foreign

political history of United Fruit in Guatemala, 1899-1944 (Wilmington, 1993), describes the development of the UFCO and its relationship with the infrastructure and politics of Guatemala, emphasizing how the company preferred to deal with dictators.

²¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956; the white house years* (Garden City, 1963).

²² Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala; rebels, death squads, and US power* (San Francisco, 1991), P.30-34; Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, P. 99-117.

investment. “The keynote of our (US) policy toward Guatemala, therefore, is that the anti-communist victory of June 1954 must be preserved and consolidated and that we accept and work through the Castillo Armas government as the best present expression of Guatemalan desire for a free, genuinely anti-communist, democratic and progressive government.”²³ Concerning those goals he was partially successful, he enacted strong anti-communist policies imprisoning thousands and approving illegal murders of many civilians; he also did improve conditions for big business by repealing most of the laws enacted by the previous regime. However in regards to improving government he failed; following his presidency, military rule would continue. He succeeded in accomplishing the most important goal of security from communism but the other goals of democracy and progressive government would remain unreached. Except for his administrations harsh repression of groups the US perceived as threats, the Castillo Armas presidency was a complete failure. The motivation behind his assassination remains unclear, but the numerous attempted military coups during his presidency illustrate the political divisions that his administration made worse and which would continued to cause future problems for Guatemala.²⁴

Following the Guatemalan Coup the next major event in US-Latin American relations was the Cuban Revolution of 1959. The effect of this revolution on US-Latin American relations was critical. The success of the Cuban revolution suggested that containment had failed. Fidel Castro turned to communism as a model for

²³ NSA (National Security Archive) 00015, Operations Coordinating Board Plan for Guatemala, “Plan and Policy Regarding US Actions in Guatemala,” June/1/1955.

²⁴ Stephen M. Streever, *Managing Counter Revolution: the United States and Guatemala 1954-1961* (Athens, 2000), P.33-58.

socioeconomic transformation and the Soviet Union for support against the US. Moreover, the Cuban Government wanted to export revolution. The fear of Cuban communism was a powerful psychological factor for the US. Cuba had previously been strongly linked with the United States. The US fought the Spanish-American war ostensibly to help the Cuban people, and the economic/ social ties between these two nations were strong. This Affected US policy throughout the region and motivated broad US economic and military aid strategies throughout Latin America. The specter of Cuba prompted a renewed focus on the region by John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.²⁵

The literature on the Alliance for Progress and the Presidents involved in its implementation deserves particular attention because of their impact on Guatemala during the 1960's. The Alliance for Progress was an economic assistance program for Latin America, which was portrayed at time as being similar to the Marshall Plan in Europe. The goal of the Alliance for Progress was to improve economic and social conditions within a country, leading to a more stable government, which would make a communist takeover less likely. The literature on the Alliance focuses on two factors, the success or failure of the program and whether the Alliance ended with Kennedy or continued during the Johnson years. Almost as soon as the Alliance was implemented, it inspired criticism and discussion. Arthur M. Schlesinger, special assistant to president Kennedy was one of the first to claim that President Johnson killed the Alliance. Robert Kennedy JFK's brother and Attorney General was also one of the early commentators

²⁵ Thomas Patterson, *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution* (Oxford, 1994); Louis Perez, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens, 1990).

that blamed Johnson and in particular Thomas Mann, who Johnson appointed assistant secretary of state for Latin America and coordinator of the Alliance for Progress.²⁶ *The Alliance that Lost its Way* by Jerome Levinson, who was an Alliance official during the Kennedy years, and Juan de Onis, a journalist, is a good example of a work that saw the Alliance as a positive attempt, but one that failed because of its overly ambitious goals, excessive bureaucracy, and frequent subordination to national security concerns. These early commentators were all part of the Kennedy administration and had personal involvement in the events they were commenting on.

The next group of authors who examined the alliance lacked this personal investment in the Alliance. Historians Stephen Rabe and Jeffery Taffet concur with their predecessors that the alliance was a failure, but think that it was due primarily to the ideological inconsistency of the US. The Alliance devolved from the idea of spreading progressive reform to a means of aiding political allies, thereby weakening its appeal throughout the region. Because of this disillusionment with the program, what was supposed to be an alliance between the US and Latin America became a US aid program with limited local input or investment. Rabe approaches the subject with a broad examination of the Alliance and its role throughout the region. Taffet provides a detailed assessment of the Alliance through several case studies and an exacting understanding of US policy and its players. Both these authors also expand their assessment of the Alliance to the Johnson years, although Taffet covers significantly more of the Johnson

²⁶ Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy confronts communist revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, 1999), P.173-174.

years then Rabe. Johnson and Mann are presented as having changed the emphasis of the Alliance, with the Mann doctrine's focus on political stability over social reform.²⁷

Further complicating the assessment of Johnson and Kennedy's involvement in the Alliance is the way their presidencies are portrayed. Kennedy has been the subject of numerous positive biographies²⁸ and his success in foreign policy was exemplified by major events like the Cuban missile crisis. Johnson on the other hand, has been seen as a president with a domestic orientation. There have been numerous books emphasizing the tragedy of his administration and in particular his failures in regards to Vietnam.²⁹ The positive perception of Kennedy and the negative perception of Johnson greatly affected how the Alliance has been perceived under their administrations. The image of Johnson is slightly more complicated, however. Randall B. Woods in *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* explores Johnson's liberal background, describing his desire for social reform as equal or greater than his predecessor. His assessment of the Vietnam War is also more positive, seeing it as a component of larger foreign policy concerns that were beyond Johnson's control. In between the overly critical works and Woods' more positive assessment, Robert Dallek's *Flawed Giant* presents a more thorough account of Johnson's policies. Dallek emphasizes foreign policy and points out many of Johnson's flaws, in particular his poor response to criticisms of his Vietnam War policy, at the same time he also argues that there was continuity between the Kennedy and Johnson

²⁷ Jeffrey F. Taffet, *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: the alliance for progress in Latin America* (New York, 2007); Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy confronts communist revolution in Latin America*.

²⁸ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, 1965); Ted Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York, 2009).

²⁹ Joseph A. Califano, *The Triumph & Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson: the White House years* (New York, 1991); Eric F. Goldman, *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson* (Random House, 1969).

administrations.³⁰ The place of Johnson in history is not yet established. While reviled during his term in office, his impact is still being revised by scholars. As Joseph Tulchin points out it is tempting to explain changes in US foreign policy during the 1960's as due to presidential personality and leadership. Yet both presidents illustrated a strong reaction to events in Latin America that was dictated more by larger Cold War concerns rather than any particular understanding of the region. Two examples he provides are Kennedy's decisions at the Bay of Pigs, and Johnson with the Dominican Crisis. These larger concerns combined with a disillusionment with the Alliance dictated similar actions by both these presidents.³¹ This thesis will further develop the theme of continuity between the administrations, both were motivated by the same issues and took similar actions in Guatemala.

During the 1980's at the height of the Guatemalan Civil War, the US public became aware of what was happening in Guatemala. Journalists began to report on the violence, and in turn, political scientists analyzed the events occurring there. The majority of the early literature on Guatemala can be put in one of these categories: journalism, political science, or anthropology. George Black, a journalist, was one of the first to provide a historical analysis of the Guatemalan Civil War. The process of establishing the events involved in the violence was his focus in *Garrison Guatemala*, which is no small task considering the difficulties of determining fact from rumor during

³⁰ Randall B. Woods, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* (New York, 2006); Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and his times, 1961-1973* (New York, 1998).

³¹ Joseph S Tulchin, "The Promise of Progress: US relations with Latin America During the Administration of Lyndon Johnson," in *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy, 1963-1968* (New York, 1994).

the extremely tumultuous 1980's.³² Susanne Jonas a political scientist, continued the process of trying to establish what the important developments of the conflict were, and began analyzing the peace process which ended the conflict. More work has been written on the peace process than the war itself. Jonas continued to emphasize US involvement as a key factor in the process of the war.³³ Both authors' books provide good descriptions of the events happening in Guatemala yet they are still very much bound by the constraints of when they were written; the sources they rely on are primarily newspapers and political analyses. The Jonas book is more useful due to its longer timeframe and clearer prose. Both works provide examples of the same point in the development of the literature on Guatemala, each attempting to provide a basic understanding of events, and still heavily influenced by the leftist political sympathies of the time. Neither work examines the role the US played in Guatemala with any nuance, yet these authors captured the complexity of Guatemalan social division and placed the Guatemalans at the center of the story. These two works in particular illustrate a weakness in the literature that this paper will address; the events of the 1960's are not differentiated from the Civil War as a whole. While it is convenient to examine the period from 1954 to 1996 as a continuous chain of events, this paper will illuminate the depth and complexity of the 1960's, which differentiates it from the Civil War as a whole. While these are the first overall assessments of the Guatemalan Civil War, neither provides a historical analysis. They provide good information on what was

³² George Black, Milton Jamail, and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Garrison Guatemala* (New York, 1984).

³³ Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala; rebels, death squads, and US power* (San Francisco, 1991).

happening in Guatemala but do not link those events to the larger historical trends of that period.

Due to the lack of historical writing in the United States on the Guatemalan Civil War, Latin American scholars play an important role providing a great deal of background research. Unfortunately, in the case of the Guatemalan “Violencia,” the divisiveness of the subject matter makes a great deal of this material difficult for the scholar to use. There have been numerous personal accounts of the violence of the 1980’s which are colored by the perspectives of the people who lived through those troubled times. The most famous personal account is that of Rigoberta Menchu,³⁴ which was later found to be fabricated in part. While her cause of bringing public attention to the plight of the indigenous Guatemalan people was worthy, this example illustrates the lack of trust that can be placed in these types of accounts. There have also been quite a few accounts from Christian missionaries and guerillas.³⁵ There are a few important analyses of the period in Spanish, like the truth commission report which examined the events of the Civil War in an attempt to bring into the open the horrors of the period. *Violencia Institucional en Guatemala, 1960 a 1996: una reflexion cuantitativa*,³⁶ provides a statistical analysis of state violence during this period. But for the most part those works are the exception.

³⁴ Rigoberta Menchu, *I Rigoberta Menchu* (London, 1984).

³⁵ Thomas R. Melville, *Through a Glass Darkly: the US holocaust in Central America* (USA, 2005), is a Christian missionary account. Mario Payeras, *Days of the Jungle: the testimony of a Guatemalan guerillero* (New York, 1983), is a personal account of a guerilla, which he later translated to English. Chiqui Ramirez, *La Guerra de los 36 Anos: vista con ojos de mujer de izquierda* (Guatemala City, 2001), and Payeras and Ramirez books are the only personal accounts that discuss the period of the 1960’s most accounts emphasize the violence of the 1980’s.

³⁶ Patrick Ball, Paul Kobrak and Herbert Spierer, *Violencia Institucional en Guatemala, 1960 a 1996: una reflexion Cuantitativa* (New York, 1999).

So far, we have seen how little actual historical analysis has been done on the Guatemalan Civil War, yet there are two important books that have to be discussed. Stephen Streeter's *Managing the Counterrevolution* is the first historical account to look beyond the 1954 coup and examine the roots of a counter-revolutionary ideology and program in the Castillo Armas and Ydigoras regimes. While this book does not directly look at the period of the Civil War, it does examine the development of the counter revolutionary tactics by the government and does so by examining archival material. While Stephen Streeter did not get access to archives in Guatemala, this work presents a fair and balanced analysis relying on historical material.³⁷ It is also important because it lays the groundwork for this thesis by attempting to broaden the horizon of what is studied in Guatemalan history.

Greg Grandin is an author who looms large in the historiography of Guatemala; his first book *The Blood of Guatemala* brought to light the agency of the K'iche people in Guatemala during the first 200 years of Guatemalan history and their political cultural evolution. It also created a continuity of thought linking early Guatemalan social divisions to the political division of the 20th century. This work was the first in a two part series, the second being *The Last Colonial Massacre*, published in 2004, which picked up where the previous book left off and examined the violence and chaos of the Civil War period. Through these two works Grandin explained the foundation and structure of Guatemalan society, which resulted in genocide. *The Last Colonial Massacre* is the only historical assessment of the "Violencia," and while it presents a generally balanced

³⁷ Stephen M. Streeter, *Managing Counter Revolution: the United States and Guatemala 1954-1961* (Athens, 2000).

assessment of the events, it maintains that the US played an inflammatory role in the Civil War during the 1960's. While Grandin has done work at the National Archives and presidential libraries he primarily relied on archival material from Guatemala as well as personal interviews and the US side of the story is almost completely absent. There is also the problem of objectivity, Grandin was involved in the truth commission and had an established perspective. His presentation is generally sympathetic towards the rural majority and leftist Guatemalans leaving out those in power or in other areas of the country.³⁸ While complete objectivity is of course impossible, his sympathy with the plight of Guatemala influenced the history as he portrays it.

The previous scholarship presents a great many assumptions about US involvement in Guatemala, namely that the US was a critical partner in developing a counter-insurgency program that led to genocide, and that US aid was an important factor in propping up military regimes. These works support those statements by mentioning US weapons sales and the training of Guatemalan military personnel at US bases in Panama and later in the continental US. However, none of the works previously mentioned actually examine in detail the US understanding of, or actions in Guatemala during the 1960's. Therefore, the following chapters will attempt to provide a clearer understanding of what US personnel and government actually wanted to achieve and did, in fact, accomplish in Guatemala from 1961 to 1969.³⁹

³⁸ Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala: a History of Race and Nation* (Durham, 2000); Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*.

³⁹ For more information on current historiographic trends in US-Latin America relations, see Max Paul Friedman, "Retiring the Puppets, Bringing Latin America Back In: recent scholarship on United States-Latin American relations," *Diplomatic History*, 2003: 621-635.

Like Streeter this thesis relies heavily on US government documents published by the State Department, or available online, and the LBJ presidential library. By emphasizing Guatemalan internal political developments and structuring the paper around them, a more complete picture will emerge even as the thesis examines US foreign policy. Chapter II will examine the administration of presidents Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes and John F. Kennedy during the years 1961-1963. When the tensions with Cuba developed and a new organization was established, MR-13, the first of a number of significant guerilla movements in the 1960's. Also examining US economic aid, to Guatemala during this period as well as the reasons for Ydigoras' removal from office. These events lay the groundwork for the rest of the decade and the fractures in Guatemalan society that begin to develop before 1963 establish a downward trend. Chapter III will examine Enrique Peralta Azurdia's military dictatorship from 1963 until the election of Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro in 1966. A comparison of Kennedy and Johnson's policy during this period is of particular importance, as well as the major issue of Guatemalan political transition. US responses to events in Guatemala during this period illustrate the relatively limited engagement of the US in Guatemalan affairs. US perceptions of communist guerillas remained in the background even though a war was beginning to be fought. In 1966, the violence escalated and continued to do so until it was temporarily ended in 1968. This will be the focus of Chapter IV we will see how it affected US perspectives and actions. In particular, the Presidency of Mendez Montenegro established the precedent of state-sponsored terror, an issue that was almost completely ignored by the US at this time. During the 1960's, Guatemala became a

country under siege from communist guerillas and its own government. While the United States did provide military and economic aid, they remained largely disengaged from the situation in Guatemala. After reading this thesis it should be apparent that the events occurring in 1960's Guatemala and US involvement illuminate a more nuanced scenario, in which the key developments of this period occurred slowly over a ten-year period and that assumptions about foreign involvement are mostly false in what was primarily a conflict between Guatemalans.

CHAPTER II

YDIGORAS FUENTES AND THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION, 1960-1963:

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE DECADE

In November 1960, while Senator John F. Kennedy was still on the presidential campaign trail he made a television appearance with Governor Luther Hodges of North Carolina the day before the election. During the question and answer session a man named Jack from Jacksonville, Florida asked, “what will you do about Castro?” Kennedy’s response to this question encapsulated the US perspective on Latin America during his administration. The Senator started by saying that something must be done about Castro and the danger from the close proximity of a communist nation that was intent on spreading its ideology, mentioning difficulties in Guatemala and Panama thought to be inspired by Castro’s influence with student and intellectual groups. After pointing out the inadequacy of current efforts to contain communism in the region, Kennedy elaborated on the economic weakness of the region and the importance of strengthening the region to resist communism. “So I would suggest that the United States try to develop again the spirit of the good neighbor policy of Franklin Roosevelt, that we regard this as the first line of defense, that we bring in students, that we broadcast in Spanish to Cuba and all of Latin America, that we tell our story, that we help them distribute their agricultural products and resources, and maintain their economy and provide a gradual increase in the standard of living for each person. This is

the key to Latin America.”⁴⁰ The key for the Kennedy administration was this overarching desire to help increase the economic and social stability of the region. Yet, as the previously cited statement suggests, this was tempered by a conventional understanding of the situation, which was dominated by the threat of communism. In between the hopes for grand social planning and combating the fear of a communist insurgency, embassy officials and employees of various agencies in Latin America were stuck trying to fight for both these goals.

From 1958 to 1963 Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes was the president of Guatemala; he came to power through a series of political deals, which resulted in his appointment by the constituent assembly following the assassination of Castillo Armas and after the annulment of the original fraudulent election in which Castillo Armas' party secured the election for its candidate. Ydigoras Fuentes' successful bid for presidency was due in large part to split public opinion. The Guatemalan right wanted a stronger government, and the left held Castillo Armas and his party responsible for the coup against them in 1954. Ydigoras Fuentes played off these two perspectives simultaneously presenting himself as both anti-communist and anti-American. While he had run for president against Arevalo in 1950 and lost, the 1958 election illuminated his sharp political acumen and ability to play both sides of the political spectrum. Ydigoras Fuentes' anti-Americanism in the early years of his presidency was not emotional but calculated. The

⁴⁰ John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, "Television Program of Senator John F. Kennedy, Manchester, NH," *The American Presidency Project*, November 7, 1960, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25690&st=guatemala&st1=> (accessed 01/28/2011).

fact that his opponent Cruz Salazar was supported by the US in the election only served to strengthen his position. Disliking the disparity between the large amount of aid which his predecessor had received from 1954 to 1957 and the significantly smaller amounts his administration received, he consistently maneuvered for more US aid.⁴¹ Based upon Ydigoras Fuentes' later attempts to manipulate public and international opinion it is reasonable to assume that his early anti-Americanism was only a ploy which helped him win political support.⁴²

Guatemala after the Castillo Armas regime was united in its desire to not be controlled by a US puppet government. That a nation wanted to manage its own affairs without the interference of outside powers is understandable, yet as has been mentioned before, Guatemala has had precious few periods in its history when democracy and independence were a possibility. The election in 1958 was a moment when Guatemala could have returned to a democratic system. George Black claims that the military annulled the original election and the army high command imposed its own handpicked candidate, General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes.⁴³ There is no evidence to support this from US documentation of the election; the election is instead described as situation in which a plurality could not be achieved, therefore, in the legislative assembly a political deal

⁴¹ Charles D. Brockett, "Labour and Management Fight it Out in Post-1954 Guatemala," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 2010: 517-549, points out the lack of support for Guatemalan development post 1954 as due to the inability of US official's to surmount the difficulties posed by conservative elites and US businesses. Despite US official's attempts to build a more progressive regime once the immediate threat of communism had been stopped, it was harder to get support to help build up Guatemala.

⁴² NSA 00029, Department of State, Instructions, "US-Cuban-Guatemalan Relations: Talking Points," May/24/1960.

⁴³ George Black, Milton Jamail, and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Garrison Guatemala*, P.20.

was made, and Ydigoras assumed the presidency.⁴⁴ The political division that made it impossible to declare a clear winner further illustrates the difficulty Guatemala had in establishing a legitimate working democracy.

Ydigoras' American counterpart John F. Kennedy took office in January of 1961, however two events from 1960 have a profound impact on his administration's influence in Guatemala. The training of forces for the Bay of Pigs Invasion in Guatemala, and the attempted Guatemalan military coup that resulted in the emergence of the guerilla group MR-13 were two such events. As has been stated previously, the issue of Cuba looms large, and was probably the most important feature of US-Latin American relations in the early 1960's. A telegram from the embassy at Tegucigalpa, Honduras to the other Central American and Cuban embassies illustrates the tension throughout the region. Several Central American presidents attended a ball in the coastal town of Matias de Galvez in Guatemala, President Ydigoras Fuentes (Guatemala), and President Villeda Morales (Honduras) approached Ambassador Robert Newbeing and Ambassador John J. Muccio and informed them of their concern over US-Cuban relations. "Ydigoras expressed the view that the US should take forceful action now and even suggested that Guatemalan territory might be used for Castillo Armas type operation." "Villeda suggested that possible Central American countries particularly Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador might take some joint approach towards Castro with a view to softening

⁴⁴ State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United State, 1958-1969: American Republics* (Washington DC, 1991), P.815.

tensions.”⁴⁵ While President Lemus Lopez of El Salvador did not want anything to do with these plans against Cuba, two Central American Presidents were thinking about Cuba and discussing it with US officials, and the fear of Cuban influence in the region only continued to grow.

The previous incident and the question Kennedy was asked while on the campaign trail mentioned at the beginning of this chapter illustrate how the issue of Cuba had begun to take on a mystique and power all its own. The loss of Cuba to communism had a particular power in the minds of Americans. For most of the 20th century the US had treated Cuba like a colony or protectorate. The images of American tourists at Cuban nightclubs and casinos had a strong place in the minds of the average American. When Cuba had a successful revolution based on an anti-American sentiment that transformed into support for communism, the traditional understanding of the Caribbean was shattered.⁴⁶ US hegemony and power in its own backyard had seemed unchallenged after the defeat of Arbenz in 1954; until Cuba’s successful revolution in 1959, communism had been a problem to deal with in far-off countries, like Greece, Germany, and Korea. After 1959 the US felt physically threatened by a communist country close to home; this shift in circumstances powerfully affected the American public and its leadership.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ NSA 00027, Department of State, Telegram to Guatemalan Embassy, “Issues With Cuba,” March/16/1960.

⁴⁶ Louis A. Perez Jr., *On Becoming Cuban: identity, nationality, and culture* (Chapel Hill, 1999), illuminates the close cultural ties between the US and Cuba.

⁴⁷ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge, 2007), P.158-206, points out the importance of Cuba and Vietnam in shifting the focus of the Cold War to the third world.

When discussing US-Cuban relations it is impossible to ignore the Bay of Pigs invasion. In 1961, a unit of anti-Castro Cuban exiles landed on the southwest coast of Cuba in order to begin a campaign against the Cuban government. The training of this group took place at Retalhuleu, Guatemala and at various locations in the US. This training was supported by Ydigoras Fuentes in the hope that it would improve his position with the US and give him a more favorable position when bargaining for aid or assistance. Despite significant training in Guatemala and the United States, the mission ended on the beach in complete failure. Cuban intelligence was warned of the invasion, partially because of the widespread knowledge within Guatemala that the training was occurring. After landing, the exile forces were trapped on the beach without air support, the ships carrying their supplies were destroyed by the Cuban air force, and their position came under fire quickly. 114 members of the invading force were killed and 1189 were captured; the operation was a complete failure. This was one of the most embarrassing failures for the US during the Cold War. What the Bay of Pigs incident illuminates here is the potency of the US belief that it could effectively control the Caribbean and Latin America. The United States needed to focus on “the most dangerous area of the world.” The direct relationship of these events to Guatemala is that their training of these counter-revolutionaries further exacerbated Guatemala’s poor relationship with Cuba, and at the same time it motivated increased assistance to Guatemala from the US.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ James G. Blight and Peter Kornbluh, *The Politics of Illusion: the Bay of Pigs invasion reexamined* (Boulder, 1998), is a good international approach to the Bay of Pigs invasion that uses oral histories and recently declassified documents. Howard Jones, *The Bay of Pigs* (Oxford, 2008), is also a recent addition to the history on the Bay of Pigs, he however adopts a more US centric perspective.

Ydigoras Fuentes by all accounts was a shrewd politician. Seizing on US tensions with Cuba, he began to make numerous and strident statements about the growing influence of Cuba and their efforts to train forces to overthrow the Guatemalan Government. In 1958 the US had made plans to sell surplus B-26's to Guatemala but held off because of a desire to limit arms shipments to the Caribbean and not escalate tensions. However, when it became clear that Ydigoras was willing to purchase aircraft elsewhere, it was decided to sell Guatemala 8 planes.⁴⁹ In May 1959, he claimed that a Cuban invasion fleet was approaching Guatemala, and on December 5, 1959 the Guatemalan representative to the OAS accused Cuba of supporting subversive movements in Guatemala. Both these accusations served the internal political purposes of Ydigoras Fuentes. The first allowed him to purchase a frigate for the navy without congressional approval and the second bolstered his political position with the anti-communist Guatemalan Right. While the US knew that he was crying wolf, these actions still heightened tension between Cuba and Guatemala. Ydigora's use of Cold War rhetoric allowed him to continually claim the political and moral high ground. He still held onto this ideology even after his removal from office. These tensions caused by Ydigoras Fuentes illuminate the problems between Guatemala and Cuba. The US was aware that Cuba posed no immediate threat to Guatemala, a nation that faced far greater internal issues, yet this difficult relationship between these two powers still created problems.

⁴⁹ NSA 00029, Department of State, "Informal Talking Points for Discussion Abroad, on US-Cuban Relations and US-Guatemalan Relations," May/24/1960. This is a similar case to those described by Jeffery A. Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet: the Anglo-American fight for aviation supremacy* (Cambridge, 2007). Despite the benefits of reducing tensions in the region by restricting the sale of aircraft, the desire to maintain a consistent air mission won out over political caution.

The perception of Ydigoras' government as a corrupt tool of US imperialism had a strong place in the mindset of Castro and his advisors. One of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara's formative experiences was in Guatemala when Arbenz was overthrown. This event was seen as the height of US imperialism in Latin America, and Guatemala's continuing association with the US further worked against any positive relationship with Cuba. Ydigoras' use of Cold War rhetoric to justify his actions and policies did not just affect the internal situation in Guatemala but it severely affected Cuban-Guatemalan relations during the 1960's. The Cuban response to Guatemalan rhetoric was loud and angry; the Cuban Foreign Minister stated on April 23 "in these very moments, with the complicity of President Ydigoras and the United Fruit Company," Guatemala was being used to invade Cuba. On April 25th, a Cuban radio station stated that Ydigoras's support of US actions against Cuba was to repay the aid they gave him in his rise to power. On April 30th in what was described by the Department of State as "a document unique among its kind," Cuba made several statements about their break in relations with Guatemala. Some of the more interesting statements from this document were made about Ydigoras, and "his lunatic harangue." "His senile nervousness before internal difficulties," the statement continued, "has carried him to a delirious state." He was also called a "flabby, demented chief of state," and the "Syngman Rhee of Central America."⁵⁰ From these statements, it is clear that Cuban-Guatemalan relations were not good; this tension would persist and lead to future clashes between these two nations. The tension between these

⁵⁰ NSA 00029, Department of State, "Informal Talking Points for Discussion Abroad, on US-Cuban Relations and US-Guatemalan Relations," May/24/1960. The comment about Syngman Rhee refers to the first president of South Korea, who was often perceived as a strong man brought to power by the US. This comment implies the same about Ydigoras, that he was a tool of US imperialism in the region.

two nations never did develop into open conflict, but, in many ways, mirrored the Cold War that their more powerful allies the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in. When violence did heat up in Guatemala, it was not due primarily to international tensions, but instead internal problems.

On November 13th 1960, dissident elements of the Guatemalan military attempted to revolt against the Ydigoras government. This included attacks on a garrison in Guatemala City, and military bases in the cities of Puerto Barrios, Zacapa in eastern Guatemala. Between 51 and 60 officers of the Guatemalan military were involved in this revolt. While not very successful in Guatemala City itself, the rebels were able to take control of the important rail hub at Zacapa and the port city of Barrios. It took four days for government forces to dislodge the rebels; only after a lengthy aerial bombardment followed by a ground assault were those cities retaken. By the 17th government forces once again controlled these cities; however, rebel forces were still at large in the surrounding countryside.⁵¹

This rebellion consisted of young disaffected army officers. Due to the Cold War atmosphere there was a great deal of discussion about this rebellion being communist-inspired. Immediately after the attempted rebellion, the Foreign Minister of Guatemala informed the embassy about a Castro-inspired rebellion they had been warning the US

⁵¹ NSA 00039, NSC Briefing on Recent Social Unrest in Central America, November/17/1960; NSA 00043, Foreign Service Dispatch to State Department, "Intelligence Report on Details of MR-13 Revolt," February/20/1961; NSA 00037, Memorandum to Secretary of State, "Intelligence Note on Revolutionary Outbreaks in Central America," November/14/1960.

about.⁵² Despite the reiteration of this line about a communist attack against Guatemala, it was quickly apparent that the rebellion was not organized by Cuba because there had been no assistance from them. It was also concluded that it could not have been a communist-inspired rebellion because the PGT was not involved; nor was there any student or worker action within the capital or other cities.⁵³ The actual motivation behind the November 13th revolt was a younger corps of officers' dissatisfaction with military finances and organization. Due to nepotism by the Defense Minister, a circle of high-ranking officers maintained positions of privilege and influence. In addition to issues of favoritism, the military budget had been consistently decreasing. The budgets of younger officers were most affected. The nepotism and financial situation was blamed on the Minister of Defense Ruben Gonzales Sigui; there was even a point where a rebel faction in Zacapa offered to surrender if he stepped down.⁵⁴ It is clear that the rebels were not inspired by either communism or Cuba. The use of Guatemala as a training base for the Bay of Pigs invasion is often described as one of the key motivators for the MR-13 rebellion.⁵⁵ However, while this could have been a factor in the rebellion, it certainly was not the most important. No one on November 13 was calling for US training units to leave or making any negative statements about the US in general. Instead, the forces in rebellion were making issues of government corruption and the removal of high-ranking military officers. The younger military officers who led the rebellion were not happy

⁵² NSA 00035, Priority Report to the Secretary of State, "MR-13 Update," November/14/1960.

⁵³ NSA 00037, Memorandum to the Secretary of State, "Intelligence Note on Revolutionary Outbreaks in Central America," November/14/1960.

⁵⁴ NSA 00040, Embassy Dispatch to the State Department, "Revolt Against Government of Guatemala by Elements of Guatemalan Army," November/25/1960.

⁵⁵ Richard Adams, *Cruxification by Power: essays on Guatemalan national social structure, 1944- 1966*, P.261.

about the way the older officers were running things and the training of Cubans was just another issue which they did not like. The November 13th rebellion was the birth of the MR-13 guerilla movement in name only. After the attempted rebellion, the individuals involved dispersed, hiding in the countryside or going into exile until some of them united with other dissidents and formed a guerilla front. The idea of seeking military reform would gradually fade from the movement as it became aligned with the PGT and accepted Cuban assistance. The MR-13 movement became more concerned with fighting the established order, and with the alliance with communists came an adoption of communism as an ideology. This rebellion marks the beginning of what has been called 'la violencia' in Guatemala.⁵⁶

It must be noted that while the Guerilla insurgency is a major component in the story of Guatemala during the 1960's, these groups will not be the focus of this thesis. While significant work deserves to be done on these groups and their evolution during this period, the constraints of time and the difficulty of obtaining information on these necessarily secretive organizations limits their role in the following pages. There has also been no definitive work done on these organizations. They are discussed in the works by journalists on the Guatemalan Civil War, but there is no strong consensus about the details of their development and actions.⁵⁷ The composition and motivation of MR-13 as well as that of the Fuerzas Armadas en Rebelde (FAR, the radical military arm of the PGT) were constantly shifting and evolving during this period. While MR-13

⁵⁶ For a more thorough examination of the MR-13 rebellion see Stephen M. Streeter, *Managing Counter Revolution: the United States and Guatemala 1954-1961*, P. 210-238.

⁵⁷ The clearest summary of these Guerilla groups can be found in Brian Loveman and Thomas Davies, "Guatemala Case Study," in *Guerilla Warfare*, 181-208 (Wilmington, 1997).

originated as part an attempted military coup, it would later be involved with other anti-government forces with stronger communist ties. These two groups along with others would form alliances and break out on their own, with little consistency or cooperation. If their role in the following pages is understated, this reflects the American view of these events.

The immediate US response to the events of November 13th was not as strong as one might have expected. Prior to the rebellion, the need for more funds to go to Guatemala was already being discussed.⁵⁸ The establishment of an information and intelligence bureau to train Guatemalans and create a reliable information network had also been recommended five months before the outbreak of fighting.⁵⁹ When the Ydigoras administration came under attack a few months later, the only response from the US was to reaffirm their support of Ydigoras, to rush grant aid and deploy American forces in the region for intelligence gathering purposes. The notes from a National Security Council briefing illustrate that despite the fear of Cuban insurgency, no intelligence from Guatemala supported the theory that Cuba was involved in the rebellion, and Ydigoras seemed to have the situation under control.⁶⁰ Almost every other intelligence assessment continued to state that the guerilla forces that developed from the November rebellion did not pose a threat to the Guatemalan Government and US aid mirrored this belief in the government's stability.

⁵⁸ NSA 00031, Office Memo from OAP Mr. Stewart to ARA (Assistant Regional Administrator/ Bureau of Inter-American affairs) "Guatemalan Situation," July/26/1960.

⁵⁹ NSA 00032, ICA (International Cooperation Administration) Report from Guatemala, "Special Police Investigation Services," August/25/1960.

⁶⁰ NSA 00039, NSC Briefing Latin America, November/17/1960.

The US assessment of the Guatemalan situation following the November rebellion was of particular importance. Guatemala after 1954 was supposed to be the model of success for Central American nations. Before Castro took power, Guatemala provided an example of the defeat of communism in the western hemisphere, yet after 1960 the façade began to crack. Despite the awareness that the MR-13 rebellion was not inspired by communism US officials continued to initially look at Cuba as the cause of problems in Guatemala, only acknowledging internal factors slowly. Organizations like the USIS (United States Information Service), whose stated primary objectives were “to expose the international Soviet communist conspiracy,” “to expand Guatemalan support of the US,” and “to develop understanding and confidence in social, economic, and political institutions of a free society,” operated only within a Cold War mindset, and never adjusted to the need for new goals or understanding in the region.⁶¹

The USIS represented one extreme of the spectrum of US understanding of Guatemala; on the other side, most diplomatic communications from Washington represent a more dispassionate approach. The tone is neutral and analytical. In response to urgent requests from the embassy in Guatemala and the Government of Guatemala for aid, Washington replied. “We recognize possible value of timely assurance to Ydigoras of US support against external aggression. However we also recognize Castro regime indications its intention avoid action that could be labeled aggression, and that much of Ydigoras opposition is non-communist. Under these conditions our objective is to encourage Ydigoras in his difficult situation while limiting any adverse publicity

⁶¹ NSA 00041, Report from USIS Guatemala to USIA Washington, “Country Assessment Report,” February/3/1961.

resulting from such action.”⁶² That Washington understood the opposition against Ydigoras was non-communist shows their more critical perspective, and ability to sometimes look beyond a myopic Cold War perspective. This was a typical response from Washington; it attempted to maintain a good relationship with the Guatemalan Government, while at the same time maintaining their distance and not becoming too involved in the internal problems of a foreign government.

In the middle of these two extremes, the US embassy and its officials represented an important middle ground. The embassy did not have the vested interest in presenting the problems in Guatemala as primarily communist-inspired like the USIS or in distancing themselves from those problems like other arms of the foreign policy apparatus. Instead, communications from the ambassador to Washington DC presented well-rounded assessments of the situation in country, mentioning both key issues, the communist threat and internal political problems. While a more complete assessment of the situation was generally provided by the embassy, it consistently sided with the Guatemalan Government’s goals and objectives in recommending US action and aid. In this particular case the embassy concluded that “it is very much in the security and foreign policy interests of the United States for the present Guatemalan Government to complete its term and keep the country on the road of democracy.”⁶³ While there was no serious trend towards democracy in Guatemala, the government under Ydigoras Fuentes

⁶² NSA 00046, From Dean Rusk to Guatemalan Embassy, “What to Tell Ydigoras,” April/28/1961.

⁶³ NSA 00047, Report from Guatemalan Embassy to State Department, “Internal Security Situation and Needs,” May/22/1961; this report is representative of the way in which the embassy consistently assessed the situation and recommended action.

was anti-communist and willing to work with the US, so it was portrayed in a positive light.

In addition to the US and Guatemalan response to the MR-13 rebellion and their continuing efforts to destabilize the government, two other events of particular importance happened during 1961. A new ambassador was appointed to the Guatemalan post, and Belize became an international issue. The appointment of John O. Bell was important, as he held the position of ambassador to Guatemala throughout the remainder of the Kennedy administration and some of the Johnson administration; ambassador John J. Muccio was replaced on November 15, 1961 and Bell was replaced by John Gordon Mein on September 3, 1965. Bell was a career foreign service officer with significant experience managing various US aid programs, his previous position being regional director of ICA (International Cooperation Administration) operations in the Near East and South Asia. By installing John Bell, a man with considerable experience in managing foreign assistance, Kennedys' commitment to the Alliance for Progress was apparent. A point of particular interest was that Ambassador Bell traveled to his post by car along the Inter-American highway in order to further publicize US funding of that project.⁶⁴

The issue of Belize from a US perspective, while less important than economic or military aid, helps illuminate the limits of the not so special relationship between Guatemala and the US. Guatemala had a long-standing border dispute with Britain and

⁶⁴ NSA 00054, Memorandum for Kenneth O'Donnel, "Mr. Bell Requests an Appointment/ Biographic Sketch Enclosed," December/8/1961.

its territory British Honduras. In 1961 president Ydigoras claimed that a deal was struck with the US whereby in return for helping stage the Bay of Pigs invasion the US would intercede in the dispute on behalf of Guatemala.⁶⁵ While the US firmly denied any such deal and no record exists of it, the issue did not go away. The directions from Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State, in response to this claim, was to be polite and friendly but non-committal about the issue of Belize and point out the lack of a record of any such agreement.⁶⁶ This strategy was fairly representative of US-Guatemalan relations. When asked for money, materials, or direct aid the US was most likely to reassure Guatemala of their continued support but not take any significant action. Only if there were extenuating circumstances like the immediate threat of a Communist takeover or the possibility of a government collapsing did the US get involved. While Belize continued to be an issue for the Johnson administration, it, like Guatemala's internal divisions, would remain largely ignored by US policy makers.⁶⁷

After the initial November 13th revolt, there were no major disturbances of the peace for some time. Guatemalan police continued searching for those involved or linked to the revolt. However the police force was largely unsuccessful. This was mainly due to the wild and mountainous terrain in northeastern Guatemala where most of the

⁶⁵ NSA 00055, Department of State, Telegram to the Secretary of State from Guatemalan Embassy, "Discussion with Ydigoras About Belize," December/31/1961.

⁶⁶ NSA 00056, Department of State, Telegram From the Secretary of State to Guatemalan Embassy, "Action: Belize Issue Response," January/04/1962.

⁶⁷ The issue of Belize is generally ignored by authors examining Guatemala, for the most part because it has no serious effect on any major events, Stephen M. Streeter, *Managing Counter Revolution: the United States and Guatemala 1954-1961* does mention it as a possible a factor in the negotiations to train Cubans in Guatemala.

participants of the rebellion went into hiding, as well as the general incompetence of the Guatemalan police force.⁶⁸ Several reports from the US embassy mention police attempts to capture individuals involved in the revolt, in particular Cesar Augusto Sosa, half-brother to Marco Antonio Yon Sosa, the leader of the MR-13 front at that time. However, these attempts were unsuccessful and drove many of those involved in the MR-13 rebellion to seek refuge in Mexican and Venezuelan embassies, from which they fled the country.⁶⁹ More successful than any attempts to quell the revolt and punish those involved was the political repression that immediately followed. The November revolt was used to justify imprisoning political opponents, particularly those who had run against Ydigoras in the previous presidential election. Mario Mendez Montenegro, head of the Partido Revolucionario (Revolutionary Party, PR) , was arrested under suspicion of being involved in the revolt despite any evidence to support that claim; he would eventually be released and exiled. Mario Sandoval Alarcon, leader of the MLN party, and five others were also exiled to El Salvador.⁷⁰ Despite a minor shootout between police and a few individuals attempting to escape arrest, there were no serious violent incidents in Guatemala in 1961. However this tranquility would not last, as violence and political movements began again in early 1962.

The year did not start out well for the Guatemalan government. In January there were scattered bombings in Guatemala City. While there were no significant casualties from these attacks, they illustrate how government pressure against those involved in the

⁶⁸ The many problems of the Guatemalan police force are noted in this ICA assessment, NSA 00019, ICA Report, "Report on National Police in the Republic of Guatemala," April/9/1956.

⁶⁹ NSA 00050, from Embassy to Secretary of State, "Information on MR-13 Members," July/26/61.

⁷⁰ NSA 00058, Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, "Update on State of Siege and Montenegro Situation," January/30/1962.

November 13th coup and opposition parties had radicalized segments of the population. MR-13 also began to try to strengthen its position by seeking out alliance with other political parties. This would lead to a consolidation with radical members of the PGT and other dissatisfied elements of Guatemalan society. On February 7, 1962 50 men led by Yon Sosa attacked the Bananera military detachment north of Zacapa and south of Puerto Barrios. They forced a UFCO employee Robert Richards to open the safe and absconded with 18,000 Quetzals.⁷¹ While there was no serious damage done, some prisoners were taken. The government of Guatemala remained worried about possible ties with Cuba as well as the likelihood that the guerillas would use the money to buy more weapons and supplies.⁷² It would be easy to think that MR-13 would continue to expand its operations and remain the biggest challenge to the government; however the general public also began to mobilize against the Ydigoras administration.⁷³

In March following the opening of a new session of Congress, students began to protest the clearly fraudulent appointment of congressional positions to members of parties that were disliked by the majority of the population. 27 of 33 seats went to the pro-government coalition of Redencion, MND (National Democratic Movement), and PUD (Democratic Unity Party); particularly fraudulent was the attempt to award 2 of 4 seats representing Guatemala City to pro-government individuals despite the fact that,

⁷¹ Guatemala had a one to one exchange rate with the US until 1986 according to The World Bank, "Official Exchange Rate (LCU per US\$, period average)," *The World Bank*, 2011, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/PA.NUS.FCRF?page=4&order=wbapi_data_value_1980%20wbapi_data_value%20wbapi_data_value-first&sort=asc (accessed April 6, 2011).

⁷² NSA 00059, Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, "MR-13 Attack," February/7/1962.

⁷³ Louisa Frank, "Resistance and Revolution: the development of armed struggle in Guatemala," in *Guatemala*, ed. Susanne Jonas and David Tobis, 176-192 (North American Congress on Latin America, 1974), describes the evolution of the MR-13 and FAR guerilla fronts; it does have a bias to the left and begins the timeline of these organizations too early, by overstating their development immediately after the 1954 coup. Yet, it still is useful and provides a good overview of their development.

according to an ARA (American Relief Administration/ Bureau of Inter-American Affairs) report, those parties received less than 20% of the vote. The student protests were mostly peaceful until the 13th, when judicial police began using force to try to control the crowds. They opened fire on crowds and used extreme force in attempts to disperse demonstrators. The protests spread and rioting broke out. The government violence further motivated the population, spurring support from rail workers as well as a sympathetic general public. The functioning of trains and industry became very difficult as these protests expanded into riots. The riots were not stopped until the 17th when the military took control of the city and reduced the riots to occasional outbursts. The US assessment of the situation estimated at least 22 deaths, over 500 wounded and 1000 arrests.⁷⁴ This event marked the first public protests with a mass appeal to take place in Guatemala since the 1954 coup. Until judicial police violence turned them into riots, these had been peaceful if illegal protests. This is important because it marks one of the few occasions during the Ydigoras administration when large portions of the population mobilized to express a political opinion.

The burgeoning violent activities of MR-13 and more importantly the public protests and riots forced the US to re-evaluate the Guatemalan situation. Prior to the March protests, there was no significant action taken by the US in response to Guatemalan events. Unlike the lack of response provided after the November revolt, the March riots motivated a serious response. The US commander and chief of the

⁷⁴ NSA 00075, ARA (American Relief Administration/ Bureau of Inter-American Affairs) Report, "Current Guatemalan Situation and Outlook," March/22/1962.

Caribbean forces was reinforced with 6 C-130's on March 16th, one battle group of 1400 men was put on alert, and naval forces were moved near the region.⁷⁵ The fear of the possible collapse of the Guatemalan government motivated these military actions. These actions did not actually result in direct US involvement but still suggest the United States' very serious concerns.

US policy toward and perspective on Guatemala was dominated by two factors, internal security and stability. Consistently US communications emphasized these two issues and focused on assessing whether the Guatemalan Government was able to maintain stability and security. Internal security is best defined as the means with which the government controls its population. Stability refers to whether the government was maintaining peace, avoiding communist interference, and continuing to hold onto political power. Another factor that may play a role in stability is democracy. While the US commitment to that ideal is frequently overstated, it generally was seen as an important part of creating stable countries. Yet it must be noted that as far as the US foreign policy was concerned, the appearance, not the reality, of democracy was most important. As can be seen through the example of Guatemala and in other Latin American countries during this period, US policy wanted to build democracies but not at the expense of creating stable non-communist countries. The following quote from Ambassador Bell points out Washington's emphasis on internal security, at the same time illustrating the disconnect between policy and follow through. "I have become

⁷⁵ NSA 00069, Department of the Army Communication, "Movement of Aircraft in Support of Guatemalan Situation," March/15/1962; NSA 00068, State Department to Embassy Action Report, "Action in Response to Recent Events," March/15/1962.

deeply concerned by comparing, on one hand, number of messages from Washington concerning the importance of assisting this government to maintain tolerable internal security posture and the embassy's corresponding responses and recommendations to Washington and, on the other hand, the record of difficulty in securing action with respect to Guatemala on the Washington end."⁷⁶ In short, despite Washington claiming that internal security was important, Ambassador Bell thought more needed to be done. The internal security issue was so central to US goals in Guatemala that one of the few direct memorandums to the president on the subject of Guatemala was about providing equipment for internal defense.⁷⁷ The March demonstrations and riots illuminated the weakness of the Guatemalan state and the lack of skill in responding to this challenge. This exposure of Guatemala's inability to successfully maintain internal security greatly worried the US, which had been investing in Guatemala's ability to manage this issue since 1954.⁷⁸

Improving stability was a more difficult concept to define but still was the end goal of US policy. Throughout US State Department records discussing assistance to Guatemala the theme of stability is repeated. Not democracy or rule of law, the term stability was aimed more at the idea of whether the national government was in control and at the same time preventing communist influence. The fear of communism was incorporated into this idea about stability, especially during the Kennedy administration

⁷⁶ NSA 00066, Ambassador Bell to Assistant Secretary ARA, "Need for US Action in Guatemala," March/15/1962.

⁷⁷ NSA 00070, Memorandum for President Kennedy, "Internal Security Equipment," March/15/1962.

⁷⁸ Total US military aid to Guatemala from 1954-1960 was 1.62 million dollars. "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants/ Greenbook," <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/> (accessed February 24, 2011); see Stephen M. Streeter, *Managing Counter Revolution: the United States and Guatemala 1954-1961*, for more information on US assistance to Guatemala after 1954.

whose perspective was heavily influenced by fears of Cuban communist expansion. Consistently near the end of reports or assessments of the Guatemalan situation, there were one or two points mentioning the possibility of communist takeover or action. It is important to note that while communism was consistently a feature in US reports, it was understood by the majority of US officials in Guatemala that the biggest problem facing the stability of the Guatemalan government was the political divisions on the right and in the military.⁷⁹ The military leadership and the conservative right who were powerful factors in Guatemala were not satisfied with how Ydigoras was running the country. This, combined with leftist pressure against his government, posed a serious problem for his administration that would continue to worsen.

In discussing US actions in Guatemala, the specific actions of President Kennedy that affected Guatemala must be examined. The development of a counter-insurgency special group had a direct impact on Guatemala. The second presidential directive also known as National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) #2 laid out JFK's desire to develop counter-guerilla forces, a previously weak facet of US military strategy. This represented a radical departure from previous military theories, which placed no importance on unconventional warfare.⁸⁰ Kennedy's desire to develop this type of warfare capability created a situation in which the Guatemalan armed forces could profit from this new US strategy. "I would appreciate hearing what steps we are taking to train

⁷⁹ This diplomatic message illustrated the interplay of communism and political issues in US considerations on Guatemala, NSA 00063, Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, "Importance of US Support," February/10/1962.

⁸⁰ Federation of American Scientists; intelligence resource program, *nsam2.jpeg*, Feb. 3, 1961, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsam-jfk/nsam2.jpg> (accessed Nov. 28, 2010).

the armed forces of Latin America in controlling mobs, Guerrillas, etc.”⁸¹ The CI (counter-insurgency) group was created following this presidential directive #88 to address these issues and played an important role determining what sort of resources and training would best help nations like Guatemala build and maintain a strong counter-insurgency capability. The US support and training of Central American CI forces is one of the major reasons that many commentators have laid blame for the Guatemalan repressive counter-terror tactics on the US. It is true that the US was involved in helping Guatemala’s military establishment, but this was a secondary emphasis. While the role of the US in training the Guatemalan military will be discussed at length later, however it must be noted that this counter-insurgency approach originated with President Kennedy.

This directive (NSAM #88) also emphasized building strong capable police forces in Latin America, police forces capable of maintaining control of the rural countryside and order in the cities. This statement by President Kennedy continued the trend of the US emphasizing police capabilities. Even though it was ostensibly addressing the military, the majority of the memorandum talked about having the FBI help train foreign police forces. While there was training of military personnel, the emphasis continued to be on professionalizing the police, a process that had begun after the overthrow of Arbenz.⁸² The concept of internal defense necessitated that the US

⁸¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, American Republics*, ed. Edward C. Keefer, Harriet Schwartz and Taylor W. Fain III, Vol. XII (Washington DC, 1996), P.180, NSAM #88.

⁸² NSA 00025, ICA (International Cooperation Administration), “Guatemalan Evaluation Report,” May/13/1959; as early 1956 the ICA drafted a police assessment that went directly to Castillo Armas. Some of the major recommendations included better organization and management emphasizing the need to improve recordkeeping and filing as well as the maintenance of equipment. The focus was on

focused on building police forces, not military forces. Building a strong military in Guatemala would not have helped maintain order since the US believed that a stronger military would have motivated public opinion against the administration and caused more internal division. However, a strong and professional police force could maintain stability and control riots as well as not arouse the anger or resentment of the population and aid in the process of building a better nation.⁸³ This, however, was not how things turned out. Instead, the fractured nature of the Guatemalan police forces and influence of political pressure on the police resulted in violent repression. This quote describes the US assessment of the Guatemalan action during the March riots, “In all events the action of the government of Guatemala in handling the riots was directly contrary to the advice and teaching which the police had received through the AID public safety program.”⁸⁴ Despite the continued poor performance of police forces in that crisis, training continued and by the late 1960’s the police became more professional and efficient, while other organizations took on the role of repression.

The Alliance for Progress was Kennedy’s most well-known contribution to Latin America. The most complicated aspect of US relations with Latin America was this broadly focused economic aid plan for the entire region. The goal of the Alliance was to improve economic and social conditions within a country, thereby leading to a more stable government, which would make a communist takeover less likely. In his inaugural

improving the police force not just creating an effective anti-communist force, NSA 00019, ICA report, “report on national police in the Republic of Guatemala,” April/9/1956.

⁸³ Jeremy Kuzmarov, “Modernizing Repression: police training, political violence, and nation-building in the “American Century,” *Diplomatic History*, 2009: 191-221, examines how American police training programs were central to US Cold War efforts and ideological goals of building nations.

⁸⁴ NSA 00077, from Herbert Hardin Chief of the Public Safety Branch- for the record, “Use of Firearms by National Police,” March/28/1962.

address, Kennedy introduced this program. "To our sister republics south of our border, we offer a special pledge--to convert our good words into good deeds in a new alliance for progress to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty. But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers. Let all our neighbors know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas. And let every other power know that this Hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house."⁸⁵ The desire to improve the lives of Latin Americans was clear, while at the same time we are reminded of the primacy of the Communist threat in the minds of US planners. This however is the simplified explanation of the US strategy toward Latin America. These were the primary goals of US policy, increasing democracy, social justice and welfare, as well as reducing the threat of communism; but which of those goals were the most important, and how they were achieved differed from country to country radically.⁸⁶

The Alliance's complexity and variety of different goals led to it being executed in many diverse ways, unique to each of the nations that compose Latin America. A clear example of this is that before the Punta del Este conference in Montevideo, Uruguay August 1961, the president's task force on Latin America report emphasized the importance of financial assistance to Brazil, Venezuela, and Bolivia. These nations were emphasized because of their large debts and the financial crises that they were

⁸⁵ John F. Kennedy, "John F. Kennedy: Inaugural Address," *American Presidency Project*, January 20, 1961, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=8032&st=Alliance+for+Progress&st1=> (accessed February 22, 2011).

⁸⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, American Republics*, ed. Edward C. Keefer, Harriet Schwartz and Taylor W. Fain III, Vol. XII. P. 33 State Department summary guidelines paper, "United States Policy Toward Latin America," July/3/1961.

experiencing, \$559 million dollars of Brazilian debt was rescheduled and \$338 million dollars of new financing was provided, with similar situations taking place in Colombia.⁸⁷ Each nation's economic situation and their vulnerability to communism played a role in how important they were, and how much aid they should get from the Alliance. In 1961, Chile received \$135.6 million dollars of economic assistance; Guatemala received \$31.8 million dollars.⁸⁸ It is one thing for a nation like Brazil whose population far exceeds that of Guatemala's to receive significantly more assistance yet Chile's population was only slightly larger than Guatemala's. But there was a marked difference in the amount of aid given to these two countries.⁸⁹ Both Guatemala and Chile were having problems with communists. The near election of Salvador Allende in 1958 and possibility of his election in 1964 was a problem. Allende had ties to communists and a socialist agenda, created a significant amount of fear from the US and resulted in assistance being funneled to his opponent Eduardo Frei. The important thing to note is that the Alliance was not uniform. Guatemala, El Salvador, and Panama received the most assistance out of the seven Central American republics during the Kennedy administration. Each received around \$50 million each during his administration. That was relatively little when compared to the South American nations who received far

⁸⁷ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, American Republics*, ed. Edward C. Keefer, Harriet Schwar and Taylor W. Fain III, Vol. XII. P.39-43 Adolf A. Berle Chairman of the task force on Latin America, "report on Latin America," July/7/1961.

⁸⁸ Data on US foreign aid USAID, "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants/ Greenbook," <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/> (accessed February 24, 2011).

⁸⁹ Current population numbers according to the CIA World Fact Book are 16,746,491 for Chile and 13,550,440 for Guatemala according to, Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Fact Book*, 10 2010, July, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (accessed February 23, 2011).

more assistance. This should make it clear that Central America was not the focus of US attention.

Most scholars have avoided discussing the Alliance for Progress in Guatemala in favor of the Military Assistance Program (MAP).⁹⁰ However, the Alliance for Progress should be examined to a greater extent in this situation. The overemphasis on MAP is due primarily to the development of Guatemala into a militarized society; historians and political analysts have emphasized military development over economics because of those factors' potent place in Guatemala's recent history. The 1960's as a period when there was a greater emphasis in US policy on economic aid are also brushed over quickly by these authors, rushing to get to the heart of the conflict in the 1980's.

Yet the economic stability of Guatemala was regularly the focus in State Department communications.⁹¹ There was significantly more economic aid going to Guatemala than military aid. In 1961 \$400,000 dollars of MAP assistance was provided relative to the \$31.8 million dollars of economic aid that went to Guatemala, significantly more. Even at MAP's highest level in 1963 with \$2.6 million dollars it was surpassed by the \$9.3 million dollars in AID for 1962, the low point for the Kennedy administration.⁹² Guatemala is a small country and a little bit of funding should have been able to go a long way, yet the country continued to struggle economically.

⁹⁰ Authors like George Black, Milton Jamail and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Garrison Guatemala*, and Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala; rebels, death squads, and US power* but also more recent authors like Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* consistently emphasize military assistance and ignore the Alliance.

⁹¹ NSA 00090, State Department, Telegram from Ambassador to the State Department, "Visit of Secretary Martin to Guatemala," August/20/1962.

⁹² Caesar Donato Sereseres, *Military Development, and the United States Military Assistance Program for Latin America: the case of Guatemala, 1961-1969*, PHD dissertation, (Riverside, 1971), P.188; it should

Authors like Stephen Rabe and Jeffery Taffet have explored in detail how and why the Alliance failed. They point out that economic aid cannot be successful at effecting long term social change when it is targeted at short-term issues; such as elections, and political control. The Alliance also failed to understand each country's individual situation.⁹³ The Alliance for Progress under the Kennedy administration in Guatemala focused on several programs but in general provided large loans to the government. US aid provided \$2.2 million in food aid grants. The Peace Corps was founded and did receive \$1.2 million for Guatemala in 1963. The inter-American highway project also received \$800,000 dollars and was the subject of publicity thanks to Ambassador Bell. But as mentioned above the vast majority of assistance went to USAID grants or loans and not any particular project directed at an issue in need of improvement. Over Kennedy's years in office \$11.5 million was provided for social progress trust fund loans, these were the only loans directed at a particular issue, and it was only a third of the total \$28.9 million in total economic aid from 1961-1963.⁹⁴

While there are clear records of how much money the US was giving to Guatemala, there is very little evidence of what happened to the money in Guatemala. There are occasional references in US diplomatic communications about the success of various programs but no details about how the majority of the money was used. This is

be noted that Sereseres statistics differ slightly from those in the "Greenbook" this is due primarily to the fact that Sereseres added non-concessional US loans to his totals; otherwise these two sources of data provide the same information.

⁹³ Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy confronts communist revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, 1999) P.148-172; Jeffrey F. Taffet, *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: the alliance for progress in Latin America*.

⁹⁴ "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants/ Greenbook," <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/> (accessed February 24, 2011).

an area where further research needs to be done. It is possible that through an examination of Guatemalan archives or corporate records of US and Guatemalan businesses that a more specific accounting of US aid could be achieved. According to David Tobis, these corporations were receiving funds.⁹⁵ Despite this weakness, the amount of aid and what the US intended it to be used for can be seen from the data provided here. This problem of understanding what happened to US aid in Guatemala does not hinder understanding what US policy towards Guatemala was.

The alliance did attempt to stabilize and build the Guatemalan economy as it did in many other nations, but the failure to take into account the foreign business structure and deep social divisions in Guatemalan society completely nullified any attempts at reform. The UFCO, IRCA (International Railroad of Central America), and Empresa Electric were three US corporations that all but dominated the Guatemalan economy for decades. During Kennedy's presidency, they made up 43% of foreign investment in Guatemala. The overwhelming presence of US corporations in Guatemala's weak economy retarded any progress towards economic independence and growth.⁹⁶ It may be that the aid went directly into the hands of a strong oligarchy, which controlled much of Guatemala's economic capacity. Around 165 or so families traditionally held a significant percentage of the country's wealth and power; these individuals represented the powerful conservative elites that supported the military and wanted to limit reform to

⁹⁵ David Tobis, "The Alliance for Progress: developments program for the United States," in *Guatemala in Rebellion: unfinished history*, ed. Jonathan L. Fried, Marvin E. Gettleman, Deborah T. Levenson and Nancy Peckenham, 92-97 (New York, 1983).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

maintain their economic dominance.⁹⁷ The funds from the Alliance were going directly to a government and the conservative elite that wanted to limit reform, so the goal of improving social conditions was unlikely to ever be accomplished. While the economic aspect of the Alliance was failing, the country did not fall to Communism. Guatemalans were focused on Cold War divisions and the aid received, while successful in temporarily bolstering a failing economy, had no powerful social impact.

By 1963 the situation in Guatemala had become more politically charged, following the March protests against the government, Ydigoras' weakness was apparent to most observers, and pressure was being placed on his administration from the left and right sides of the political spectrum. The US also began to better understand that some of the problems in Guatemala were directly linked to Ydigoras' policies. "He and his immediate entourage are thoroughly corrupt and becoming conspicuously so even for Latin America"⁹⁸ This harsh assessment of the Guatemalan president illuminates the fact that when the US, which had been historically very forgiving of corrupt allies, started worrying about your ethics, problems were not very far away. In April following the March protests, US officials began to speculate about options for dealing with whoever succeeded Ydigoras.

Once again, the military was not pleased with Ydigoras; this time the air force in particular was upset. The Guatemalan financial weakness resulted in continued cuts and

⁹⁷ "Guatemala's Bourgeoisie," in *Guatemala*, ed. Susanne Jonas and David Tobis, 210-251 (North American Congress on Latin America, 1974), this appendix provides a history of the leading 20 families and their financial development in the 20th century.

⁹⁸ NSA 00082, ARA Assessment of Guatemala, April/26/1962.

lack of funding for the air force, creating a situation similar to the circumstances surrounding the November 13 rebellion. On December 25th 1962, several people were killed or injured and a great deal of property damage was done when this military faction attempted to seize power.⁹⁹ It was a small group, however, and was quickly stopped. This incident like previous ones resulted in the imprisonment of political rivals unconnected to the attempted coup, as well as a request for the delivery of several jets from a previously approved aid program, to help placate the air force members calling for more funding and resources.¹⁰⁰ While this was happening there were still leftist movements plotting action against the government. Enemies on both sides of the political spectrum surrounded the Ydigoras regime, and all it took was one poor decision to cause a successful coup.

1963 was an election year in Guatemala, whose presidents serve six-year terms. It looked as if the unexpected was going to happen, and President Ydigoras was going to serve a full term and be the second elected president in Guatemalan history to do so. Early on, the right's biggest fear was the possible return of Juan Jose Arevalo to run for office again. He was still very popular with the left, and despite not having any ties to the PGT itself, not to mention the Guerilla movements, the fear was that he would return and be the "Trojan horse of communism."¹⁰¹ In the minds of the Guatemalan right and military, the definition of a Communist might best be described as someone from a moderate or progressive political position, thus Arevalo, a leftist reformer, was seen as a

⁹⁹ NSA 000131, CIA Report, "Possible Attempt to Overthrow Government," November/25/1962.

¹⁰⁰ NSA 000104, Embassy to Department of State, "Results of Recent Unrest," November/29/1962.

¹⁰¹ NSA 000112, CIA Report, "Plan Against Government by Anti-Arevalo Officers," February/21/1963.

communist. This perception of Arevalo as the vanguard of communism inspired renewed plotting against the Ydigoras regime. As has been mentioned, Ydigoras was politically astute and he attempted to balance this precarious situation through several political maneuvers. Ydigoras at several points was close to allowing Arevalo to return to Guatemala but kept holding off, trying to play to the left's growing protests and placate the right's fear of a return to leftist rule. However, as the year continued, violence, bombings, student protests, and protests from the right continued to occur and destabilize the country.¹⁰² Ydigoras was able to maintain control of the country, stopping the rioting, and ending protests on both sides of the political spectrum. However that control would not last long. On March 27 Arevalo returned to Guatemala, and began to organize his political party. Three days later, the military acted to stop what they perceived as a communist threat to their country and a possible challenge to their power in the government.

On March 30, 1963 at midnight, three representatives of the Guatemalan army visited President Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes at Casa Crema (the presidential palace) and informed him that the military had assumed control of the government. He was given the opportunity to take refuge in a foreign embassy but refused and was taken into custody. At 9:00 AM, a plane with him and his wife flew to Managua, Nicaragua.¹⁰³ This was the story of Ydigoras Fuentes' removal from office according to the US State Department.

¹⁰² NSA 000115, Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, Government Action Against Protests on Both Sides," March/17/1963.

¹⁰³ NSA 00128, Department of State, Telegram to Secretary of State, "Army Forced Ydigoras Out of Office," March/31/1963.

In comparison the story as told by Ydigoras Fuentes in his memoirs, *My War with Communism*, is quite different. According to him, his own military betrayed him after being corrupted by Fidel Castro. In order to remove him from office they sent six tanks and 900 men to invade his home. Only after a tank broke down his door and six men with submachine guns threatened him was he taken into custody, all the while vowing to never surrender.¹⁰⁴ While his story was clearly exaggerated, the State Department's assessment of events is too bland, and Ydigoras' verbose nature makes the last part about him swearing never to surrender very believable. A great deal of blame for the inconsistent stories of this event can be placed on the fact that Ydigoras Fuentes was writing a memoir glorifying his efforts to fight communism; certainly, the Guatemalan military had no ties to Castro. The day after Ydigoras was removed, Arevalo left for Mexico; for the next two years, the nation of Guatemala was controlled directly by the military and the Minister of Defense, Enrique Peralta Azurdia.

During the Presidencies of Ydigoras Fuentes and John F. Kennedy, challenges to Guatemalan stability emerged, and when the US took action it did so haphazardly. Ydigoras focused on external issues like Cuban communism, and territorial disputes with Belize. His policies resulted in further political division in Guatemala; the upheaval created by those divisions, combined with the decision to allow former president Arevalo to return to the country, resulted in his removal from office. Kennedy tried to enact a far-reaching economic assistance policy to bolster stability, social reform, and reduce the threat of communism in Latin America. In Guatemala the economic effect of

¹⁰⁴ Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, *My War with Communism* (Englewood Cliffs, 1963).

the Alliances' assistance was negligible, momentarily stabilizing a weak economy. No progress was made towards reform, as conservative elites and the military opposed any developments along those lines. The last major goal of the Alliance, to combat communism, was successful to a degree. In response to continuing violence and political upheaval, the US responded by doing what it had already been doing, providing money to bolster the economy and giving military aid and training to combat the political upheaval. While the US claimed to be invested in the success of its southern neighbors, assistance only came in response to crises. The idealism so strong in Kennedy's speeches was not mirrored in the assistance to Guatemala that only was forthcoming if communism or a serious political upheaval was a threat. US assistance during the Kennedy administration to Guatemala illuminates a realistic perspective not an idealistic one, avoiding involvement unless necessary and then doing as little as possible.

CHAPTER III

PERALTA AZUDRIA AND LYNDON JOHNSON, 1963-1966: MILITARY RULE
AND THE TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN RULE

The removal of Ydigoras Fuentes from office was a critical moment for Guatemalans, yet the only response from the US was to request a timeline for elections. The removal of Ydigoras was perceived by some in Washington as positive. “What has happened in Guatemala is that more responsible elements (neither principally nor solely conservatives) have made up their minds and taken action to assure their country shall not be taken over again by communists.”¹⁰⁵ Juan Jose Arevalo’s return to Guatemala to participate in elections and his possible ties to communism was of great concern to rightist elements in Guatemala as well as Washington. It is interesting that by 1963 the Guatemalan military and the right had bought into the Cold War ideology so heavily that they overthrew their own government without any encouragement from the United States. The ideology of the Cold War served as a useful excuse for the military under the direction of Defense Minister Enrique Peralta Azurdia to take control of the government. The success of the Guatemalan military in solidifying control over the country was the most important factor for the US because it meant greater stability and less need for US involvement. The strength of the Guatemalan Right’s stance on terrorism and communism appealed to the US despite the military’s illegal seizure of power.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ NSA 00131, Telegram from Ambassador Bell to the Secretary of State, “Information on New Regime,” April/03/1963.

¹⁰⁶ NSA 00146, Telegram to the Department of State from the Guatemalan Embassy, “Internal Defense Plan Progress Report,” September/10/1963.

Guatemala was now controlled openly by the military and Enrique Peralta Azurdia until 1966 when elections were held and Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro became president.

On April 1st soon after the overthrow of Ydigoras, Ambassador Bell wrote to the Secretary of State, stating that he “Shared the department’s view we should recognize the new government relatively soon and believe it is desirable to recognize it within a few days, neither as the first over-eager nation to do so nor as a late and grudging action. Essential facts are that this group has taken power effectively; that it did so from an honest conviction that such action was required to protect the country from a succession of events which would once again lead it into communist control; that it intends to honor international commitments; and is eager to receive recognition and seriously determined to achieve both honesty and effectiveness in government, including progress toward Alianza goals.”¹⁰⁷ The decision to support the new government occurred between March 30th and April 17th. What the previous statement from Ambassador Bell illustrates was that the US wanted to remain as neutral as possible; the new regime was in control, was anti-communist, and would support US policies in the region. The evidence that the new government supported US policy and the Alliance was primarily its agreement to work towards elections but in addition to this, the clearly demonstrated commitment against communism bolstered this belief. The Alliance issue of progressive reform did not seem likely to be developed under the Peralta administration but their commitment to elections assured US officials that military rule would be temporary. While Bell’s concerns were

¹⁰⁷ NSA 00130, Telegram from Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, “Information on Recognition of the New Government,” April/1/1963.

by no means identical to the State Department's list of priorities, it does show what he believed to be the most and least important factors of this transition to a new Government.

The US pro-democracy policy in Latin America has long been exaggerated.¹⁰⁸ Claims of US altruism towards Latin America go back to the Monroe Doctrine, which was supposedly protecting Latin American countries from the tyranny of European imperialism. The belief that the US was supportive of democracies is an ideal the US public liked to believe in and politicians often used this to their advantage but there was very little reality behind it. While the Alliance for Progress had the clearly stated goal of building democratic institutions, that goal was often ignored for practical concerns. In the case of Nicaragua, for example, Kennedy continued to support the Somoza family's dictatorship, and in Argentina, the military frequently interfered in the government, yet Alliance aid continued to flow to these countries. These nations were supported despite their lack of democracy because they were stable governments. The case of Peru further illuminates this issue. Kennedy loudly denounced the Peruvian military coup in 1962, but quickly changed his position due to pressure from US businesses, the lack of effect his declaration had, and the need to ensure anti-communist support from the Peruvian military junta.¹⁰⁹ Ideologically the US supported the spread of democracy, yet when the issue of regional stability or combating communism appeared, US policy would consistently ignore ideological concerns.

¹⁰⁸ Peter H Smith, *Democracy in Latin America: political change in comparative perspective* (New York, 2005) P.36-39.

¹⁰⁹ Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy confronts communist revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, 1999) P.116-123.

While the creation of a military regime in Guatemala once again raised the issue of what US policy would be toward military governments in Latin America, the issues of stability and cooperation were more important from a US perspective. “At this juncture the announced goals of the new government and the enforced lull before the electoral campaign is reopened provide an opportunity for constructive US-Guatemalan cooperation designed to foster political as well as economic and social development.”¹¹⁰ The Peralta administrations dissolved the parliament, suspended the constitution, and curtailed all political activity; these actions, which were completely counter to US ideals of democracy and freedom, were seen as positive by US officials, providing a quiet period for constructive political development. The US support of the Peralta regime is one of the greatest examples of a disparity between US ideology and action in the case of Guatemala. Peralta’s six-point program, which was announced in his address to the public following the coup, consisted of 1) eradication of possible extreme government, 2) government honesty, 3) progressive measure to aid the needy, 4) promotion of democracy, 5) respect for international commitments, and 6) the transfer of power to an elected official upon the completion of these missions. The State Department report discussing this program pointed out that while these seemed to be the usual platitudes of a dictator trying to reassure the population, Peralta had taken action to accomplish some of these goals. Quickly after taking power Peralta enacted a 48-hour work week and a minimum wage law that had been held up in congress; there was also significant

¹¹⁰ NSA 00133, Department of State Research Memorandum to Secretary of State, “The New Guatemalan Regime and Implications for US policy,” April/5/1963, P.2.

conservative public support for his action to stop Arevalo from running for office and the new government's push towards stability.¹¹¹

The importance of elections in US-Guatemalan relations following the coup was a vital issue. It was clearly understood by Washington that a military government was not a long-term solution, that military regimes were better at removing bad governments than they were at building good ones. The need to push for elections was repeated in various messages to the US embassy.¹¹² The US balanced the importance of this issue against the role of stability and allowed Peralta to delay elections for 2 years; still consistent US pressure about elections remained a factor. In contrast to the US focus on stability and elections, there was not much discussion on the concrete issues of US aid. Following the coup, no large grants were provided or discussed. The possibility of supplying the Guatemalan Navy with several patrol ships was discussed, primarily in response to a desire to increase surveillance on Cuba.¹¹³ The brief period of peace immediately after the coup did not last long and an increasing level of guerilla violence soon began to cause problems.

It is not surprising that given the coup and the following political upheaval that the guerilla movements and anti-government forces tried to take action. Quickly following the overthrow of Ydigoras, various anti-government forces capitalized on the

¹¹¹ NSA 00133, Department of State research Memorandum to Secretary of State, "The New Guatemalan Regime and Implications for US policy," April/5/1963, P. 6-8.

¹¹² NSA 00132, Department of State action to Guatemalan Embassy, "Actions and Position to Take Following Coup," April/4/1963.

¹¹³ NSA 00136, Caprin Sanborn Department of State to Mr. Mclean State Department, "Cuban Affairs Program to Control the Movement of Subversives," April/26/1963.

confusion. Guerillas already in the northeastern part of the country began taking action and spreading leaflets calling for the population to rise in revolt.¹¹⁴ This was representative of the Foco style of guerilla war that was exported from Cuba by Che Guevara. The Foco theory proposed that small guerilla bands could mobilize and give popular dislike of the government a focus through which a mass rebellion could occur. Through guerilla attacks by these small bands, the population was supposed to be inspired to revolt. This strategy was modeled on the successful Cuban revolution; while it would not prove to be a successful strategy in Guatemala; it was still an important factor in the development of many insurgencies around the world.¹¹⁵

By this time several anti-government groups had developed, the Fuerzas Armadas en Rebeldes (FAR) was the radical arm of the Guatemalan communist party. The FAR and MR-13 formed the two major guerilla fronts. There were also numerous political groups in opposition to the government. There was a strong desire by the various anti-government forces to have a joint action, but there was also disagreement among them on what strategies they should employ. On May 15 representatives from the three major groups met; the communist PGT (which at this time was united with FAR), MR-13, and the AEU (Asociacion de Estudiantes Universitarios). These three groups in conference with the Arevalist political faction were all in agreement that the government of Guatemala needed to be removed but could not decide on how to accomplish that goal. The Arevalist faction wanted to hold off on any offensive movements so that the

¹¹⁴ NSA 00138, CIA Information Report, "Guerilla Action and Other Planned Anti-Government Action," May/2/1963.

¹¹⁵ The principles of the Foco theory are described in Che Guevara, *Guerilla Warfare*, 3rd, ed. Brian Loveman and Thomas M Davies Jr., trans. J.P. Morray (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources inc., 1997), and further codified by Regis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?* (New York, 1967).

government would end the state of siege and they would be free to resume actions with greater freedom. MR-13 wanted to rob banks in order to fund the purchase of arms and supplies and become a more effective military force. In addition, the PGT wanted to commence bombing and subversive activities as quickly as possible. The CIA report on this meeting said that decisions on a plan of action would be made later, and while these groups and other would continue to meet occasionally, they never managed to form a united front.¹¹⁶ FAR and the PGT at times were allied, and sometimes MR-13 was also united with the other groups, but these periods of cooperation never lasted long, or had any serious impact. The biggest weakness of the anti-government forces in Guatemala was their lack of unity.¹¹⁷ This did not stop them from taking action, only from taking any effective unified action.

By the end of 1963, the anti-government factions were on the offensive. MR-13 had been supplied with weapons through Mexico from Cuba. On December 24th, mortar rounds were fired on La Aurora airport. The PGT began several small-scale attacks and car bombings in Guatemala City, before the end of the year.¹¹⁸ Military action by these factions began to put more pressure on the new regime. The knowledge that Cuba had

¹¹⁶ NSA 00140, CIA Report, "Arevalist Extremists Plotting to Overthrow the Government," May/23/1963. While the subject title of this report stated it was about Arevalist extremists, this is incorrect; these groups were in opposition to the government. In the wake of the coup they tried to work with the political faction that had supported the return of Arevalo to Guatemala.

¹¹⁷ While these groups were not all guerilla insurgents, they were all fighting against the government in different ways, from political protests to military assaults on government troops. This brings up an important distinction that needs to be made, the term guerilla or insurgent generally applies to members of MR-13, or FAR who were involved in organized military operations or terrorism against the government. There was also significant pressure by leftist political groups that did not take the form of violence.

¹¹⁸ Telegram from Ambassador Bell to the Secretary of State, "Anti-Government Actions," December/24/1963, Guatemala Country file, NSF, box 54, folder 1, LBJ Library; NSA 00145, CIA Report, "Make Up and Plans of MR-13, Money Received From Cuba," August/23/1963; NAS 00155, Department of State Telegram, "Guerilla Activity Update," October/31/1963.

direct involvement in the growing guerilla problem increased their reputation and the fear they inspired. The combination of a new military government whose primary goal was to end extremist movements motivated these anti-government groups, creating a significantly tenser environment in Guatemala.¹¹⁹ The violence continued to escalate until 1966 when there was a brief respite.

Despite tensions that were growing in Guatemala following the coup, US interest was focused primarily on issues other than counter-insurgency. The desire to help Guatemala create a politically stable and economically successful nation was a top priority for the United States. George Balls recommendation was to “Take advantage of any opening to draw the Peralta regime toward the realization that its repression of political activity only drives it underground, inviting violent subversion, and that regime should consider trying to bring politics out into the open and into constructive channels.”¹²⁰ The State Department thought they could really help improve the Guatemalan situation by guiding it toward a seemingly more democratic system and through economic aid. A civil action report illuminates some of the US actions which the embassy perceived as successful; literacy programs, student meal programs, improved lifeguards at ports, bridge construction, and distribution of children’s shoes, road construction, and medical assistance.¹²¹ These were all small-scale operations that had no major impact. However, the application of US aid towards infrastructure was a

¹¹⁹ NSA 00156, US Army Report, “Action Taken Curbing Cuban Subversion,” November/13/1963.

¹²⁰ NSA 00149, Telegram from George Ball to Guatemalan Embassy, “Action to Take in Regards to Peralta Government,” September/19/1963.

¹²¹ NSA 00151, Report From Guatemalan Embassy, “Civic Action Assessment,” October/8/1963

consistent factor which US policy makers thought necessary to help make economic improvement possible.

A progress report to the Special Group on counter-insurgency, was favorable toward internal security, education, labor, and the situation with Belize. The economic assessment was neither positive nor negative, stating that while the country was not doing poorly, there were no major improvement besides tax reform and the removal of some corrupt officials. However the report noted that the honeymoon period briefly enjoyed by the Peralta administration was slipping away, due for the most part to harsh political repression and the refusal by the government to allow any sort of political action, not even a constitutional assembly.¹²² By October, members of various political parties were discussing possible coup attempts. Not even a year after the initial coup, the fractured nature of Guatemalan politics had given rise to the possibility of more political upheaval.¹²³ Despite the fact that the US in the wake of the Peralta coup emphasized the importance of elections, democracy, and economic improvement, the reality of a fractured Guatemala resisted any pressure from abroad toward reform. Yet the US persisted in maintaining a positive understanding of the new regime and its actions despite the lack of movement towards elections and the worsening political tensions.

In November of 1963, John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and Lyndon Baines Johnson became the President of the United States. This has occasionally been presented as a radical turning point in American foreign policy. The public perception of these

¹²² NSA 00150, ARA Edwin Martin to Special Group (CI), "Guatemalan Internal Defense Plan Progress Report," September/25/1963.

¹²³ NSA 00154, CIA Report, "Plans for Anti-Government Action," October/19/1963.

presidents in particular has encouraged the belief in JFK's success and LBJ's failure. Kennedy was loved internationally for his policies, particularly in Latin America, whereas Johnson has been generally despised for his escalation of the Vietnam War.¹²⁴ Johnson was most notably associated with his domestic agenda "the great society," yet on several occasions he illustrated his commitment to continuing Kennedy's policies in Latin America. At a White House reception for Latin American representatives on November 26, 1963 Johnson reaffirmed his commitment to the Alliance for Progress and stated that relations within the western hemisphere would be "among the highest concerns of my government."¹²⁵

During Johnson's administration several important situations developed in Latin America that he had to deal with, notably the Dominican crisis, riots in Panama, and the military coup in Brazil. In May of 1965, 20,000 US troops landed in the Dominican Republic in order to put an end to a movement against Reid Cabral who had taken power from the democratically elected president Juan Bosch in 1962. The Kennedy administration had supported Cabral's take over and Johnson justified this armed intervention by claiming that the movement to return Bosch to power was communist inspired, despite any such evidence of a connection. Johnson emphasized that that he

¹²⁴ There is a whole folder of newspaper clippings from numerous periodicals describing Latin America's reaction to Kennedy's death and their positive perception of him, WHCF, subject file GEN FO 6-3, Box 65, LBJ Library.

¹²⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, South and Central America*, ed. David Geyer, David Herschler and Edward Keefer, Vol. XXXI. P.1 editorial note/public papers of the president, P.27 Summary record of 53rd meeting of the National Security Council.

would not allow another Cuba.¹²⁶ A similar situation to the 1963 coup in the Dominican Republic developed in Brazil. The legitimate president of Brazil Joao Goulart was deposed in a military coup. Goulart was the vice president and came to the office of president through a complicated series of political deals, following the previous president Janio da Silva Quadro's sudden resignation. The military perceived his attempted reforms as a socialist threat and proceeded to force him out of the country by taking control of major cities. By April 1, it was apparent to Goulart that he no longer had any support and fled to the countryside finally fleeing the country on April 4th; in his place, a military regime took control and would remain in power until the 1980's. The Johnson administration supported the military in their coup attempt and were prepared to supply fuel and ammunition should a civil war break out.¹²⁷ US support for the Brazilian military coup and support of the Cabral administration are two clear examples of US Cold War fears dictating the actions of American foreign policy during the Johnson administration.

After Lyndon Johnson took the office of president he sought to improve the Alliance for Progress, which had been bogged down in bureaucracy. To this end, he appointed Thomas Mann as assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, special assistant to the president and coordinator of the Alliance for Progress. There was a great deal of criticism against Mann from former members of the Kennedy administration. He

¹²⁶ Piero Gleijeses, *The Dominican Crisis: the 1965 constitutionalist revolt and American intervention*, (Baltimore, 1978); Stephen G. Rabe, "The Johnson Doctrine," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 2006: 48-58; Stephen G. Rabe, "The Johnson (Eisenhower) Doctrine," *Diplomatic History*, 1985: 95-100.

¹²⁷ Andrew J. Kirkendall, "Kennedy Men and the Fate of the Alliance for Progress in LBJ Era Brazil and Chile," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 2007: 745-722; Phyllis R Parker, *Brazil and the Quiet Intervention, 1964* (Austin, 1979).

was blamed for killing the Alliance and for altering the Alliance significantly with the Mann doctrine. This doctrine differentiated Alliance policy between Kennedy and Johnson. Mann thought that through increasing stability in Latin America, economies would develop and communism would be less likely. This was in opposition to Kennedy's Alliance which first sought to improve Latin economies and social institutions, which in turn would result in more stable nations. Many theorists saw this emphasis on stability over social and economic improvement as a major divergence and betrayal of the Alliances progressive ideals.¹²⁸ Yet, as noted above, John F. Kennedy had supported the Peralta administration in order to increase stability in the region, ignoring his goal of social improvement. While Johnson and Mann were more blunt about the goals and purpose of the Alliance, their policy actions were similar to and motivated by the same rationale as Kennedy's.

By early 1964, guerilla activities in Guatemala had begun to escalate. A significant portion of guerilla activity was still taking place in the Zacapa, Izabal, and Petén regions of Guatemala. This traditional rural guerilla strategy consisted of small bands attacking government outposts or patrols in rural Guatemala. The area North West of Lake Izabal in the Sierra de Las Minas was where these rural guerilla forces maintained their bases, and at this time their forces were small, consisting of maybe 100 men,¹²⁹ compared to about 500 or so, with maybe another 500 part-time supporters at the

¹²⁸ Jeffrey F. Taffet, *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: the alliance for progress in Latin America* (New York, 2007), P.59-61.

¹²⁹ NSA 00157, Telegram From Embassy to State Department, "Guerilla Action in Izabal," January/9/1964.

guerilla's most powerful point in 1966. The encounters between government forces and guerillas were primarily hit-and-run attacks; at this point Guatemalan intelligence was not good enough to plan and execute any serious attacks on guerilla forces as their locations were unknown. An example of a standard engagement between these two forces during this period took place on July 22 in the Alta Verapaz region near the Mexican border. Thirty to forty guerillas ambushed a patrol from the Puerto Barrios area. By the time the army patrol took the position from which they were receiving fire, they only found deserted ammunition, rations, and bloodstains. The guerillas had fled and crossed over the border.¹³⁰ In this case, the hit and run tactics of the guerillas were only moderately effective, resulting in a few casualties, but it is representative of how the rural guerilla front was fighting the government. The MR-13 continued to be the main proponent of the rural strategy, whereas FAR began to focus more on urban operations.

The alternative to a rural guerilla front began to emerge during 1964, an urban insurgency. This type of combat was characterized by bombings, attacks on police, and was generally focused on attacking infrastructure or causing terror in major cities. On January 24 Colonel Oliva, an intelligence officer in Puerto Barrios and his son were killed in a drive-by shooting.¹³¹ Further mortar attacks on the airport in Guatemala City

¹³⁰ NSA 00182, Telegram to State Department from Guatemalan Embassy, "Action Against Guerillas," July/23/1964, it should be noted that the report goes on to mention other guerilla action in the region and their withdrawal across the Honduran border. However the coordinates given in the report show that the region while close to Mexico and the town of Chisec, this is 150 or so Km from Honduras. Despite possible inaccuracies in the report, this incident is illustrative of the frequent combat, which took place in northeastern Guatemala.

¹³¹ NSA 00161, Telegram to State Department from Guatemalan Embassy, "Report on Shooting," January/24/1964.

and the Guardia de Honor brigade headquarters illustrate the growing guerilla emphasis on urban targets. While these attacks were only moderately effective, the attack on the brigade headquarters did take out a transformer and cause blackouts in part of the city.¹³² While the move towards an urban insurgency originated with the FAR and the PGT, all the anti-government factions would eventually use this strategy to some degree. More than any increased action in rural Guatemala, the growth of an urban insurgency marked the spread of a deadly conflict, which influenced the lives of more Guatemalan civilians.

Civilian political participation was not something that Guatemalan society was very familiar with; its long series of dictators had not allowed the social institutions of democracy to develop and those that had formed during the “ten years of spring” had quickly been crushed by the Castillo Armas and Ydigoras regimes. The one exception to this was the “Huelga de Dolores,” which literally translates as Strike of Pain; it was an annual parade commemorating student protests. In 1898 Manuel Estrada Cabrera became the ruler of Guatemala and early on allowed some liberal freedoms, this was taken advantage of by students and faculty at the college of medicine at the University of San Carlos who started the “Huelga de Dolores” in 1898 to pressure the government to improve the education system. This grew into a broader cultural institution celebrating civilian protest. While it remained predominantly a student-driven event, the “Huelga” developed an important societal role, allowing the people of Guatemala an outlet for

¹³² NSA 00159, Telegram from Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, “FAR Attacks,” January/22/1964.

their frustrations with the government. Despite its origins as a protest, by the 1960's the "Huelga" had also become a celebration and parade.¹³³

The "Huelga" had not been held since 1960 when the MR-13 rebellion forced the government to crack down on political expression; in March 1964 the first "Huelga de Dolores" in three years was held. In the politically charged atmosphere of Cold War Guatemala, the "Huelga" took on serious political implications. US and Guatemalan officials feared extremist demonstrations or acts of terrorism; this was also the first time the Peralta administration dealt with student protests. In order to combat the possible riots or violence spawned by the protest, the Border Patrol put 320 instead of 80 men on the streets of Guatemala City, the National Police doubled their patrol numbers, and the Judicial police were placed on standby;¹³⁴ these forces were also given the order to use extreme force at the slightest provocation.¹³⁵ Despite government fears, student apathy and fear reduced the "Huelga" to a muted affair; the only damages were caused by the poor crowd control of Guatemalan police.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, this event signaled a change in Guatemalan society, after this event more criticism of the military regime in power began to emerge, not just from extremists but also from the political center. The "Huelga de Dolores" in 1964 did not cause major disruptions within Guatemala, but the fact that

¹³³ Jose Barnoya Garcia, *Historia de la Huelga de Dolores* (San Carlos, 1987).

¹³⁴ The police structure of Guatemala can be called complicated at best, there were several major police units: the Judicial police were a plainclothes unit primarily concerned with political crimes, the treasury police were focused on smuggling and counterfeiting, the border patrol were supposed to manage immigration and other border related issues, the national police were the closest thing to what in the US would be a city police force charged with maintaining the peace. That multiple police branches were called in conveys how worried the Guatemalan government was about the possibility of civil disobedience during the "Huelga."

¹³⁵ NSA 00168, CIA Report, "Planned Government Measures on March 20th," March/19/1964.

¹³⁶ NSA 00163, Telegram from Ambassador Bell to the State Department, "Student March," March/9/1964; NSA 00167, Telegram from Guatemalan Embassy to the State Department, "Report on Student March," March/19/1964.

it was allowed to happen at all was an important lessening of political oppression by the Peralta administration. The loosening of control on the populace eventually led to the military regime being pressured into holding elections in 1966.

Guerrilla actions and student demonstrations were not the only things the Peralta government had to worry about, internal political division once again almost brought about another coup. On May 24th 1964, the Guatemalan constituent assembly was supposed to have its first elections since Ydigoras was overthrown. The eligible population of each department voted on its representatives to the assembly. There however were only two parties on the ballot, the MLN (National Liberation Movement) a rightist party, and the PR (Revolutionary Party) a center left party. These two parties were allowed because at this time, the PR was the most moderate party and the MLN had significant support from the conservative elite and could not be ignored. Both parties were also willing to work with the military. The situation in Guatemala dictated that the only avenue to even partial political power was through the acceptance of the reality that the military was in control and joining in a coalition with them was the only way to win seats in the assembly. The PR itself, however, was barely tolerated by the extreme right, which continued to loudly voice their opposition to this party. This coalition did not last long but it illustrates the fluidity of Guatemalan political lines, which were consistently changing. The other leftist parties did not bother attempting to register because they were sure they would be denied. Rightist parties were also excluded, the MDN (National Democratic Movement) led by Jose Luis Cruz Salazar was declared ineligible because of

its ties with the previous president Ydigoras. The candidates from the MLN and PR were all selected by the military and no opposition parties were allowed. If you were not willing to support the military coalition you were not going to be involved in the government.¹³⁷

This rather blatant co-option of elections to serve the military coalition in power did not go over well. According to CIA intelligence, a national front consisting of leftists and rightists with the backing of the air force was believed to have formed in opposition to the Peralta government and its interference in the election of an assembly. Despite significant planning and military backing this coup never materialized, and the constituent assembly, set up by Peralta, went unchallenged.¹³⁸ This conspiracy illustrates the weakening of the Peralta government, which had begun with a strong position supported by the military and the right. However, by the end of 1964 that support had already begun to disappear. The lack of progress towards elections and the military domination of politics severely hurt any legitimacy that the Peralta regime had.

The US assessment of the situation in Guatemala at the end of 1964 was remarkably naive. “A majority of the population apparently supports, or is at least neutral toward the present government of Col. Peralta, in part because of its demonstration of comparatively honest and orderly administration and its steps thus far

¹³⁷ NSA 00172, State Department Intelligence and Research Report by George C. Denney Jr., “Guatemalan Elections,” May/7/1964.

¹³⁸ NSA 00173, CIA Report, “Political and Military Leaders Plans for a Coup,” May/12/1964; NSA 00175, CIA Report, “Continued Coup Plots,” May/16/1964.

toward a return to constitutionality.”¹³⁹ This sentiment expressed by Assistant Secretary Thomas Mann in an internal defense progress report, completely ignored the fact that elements of an urban insurgency were beginning to develop in Guatemala, that coup attempts were being plotted against the military government, and the only steps towards constitutionality that had been taken were in the form of a rigged election. While the issue of insurgency and political instability were mentioned later in the report, it is clear they continued to be perceived as relatively minor issues that would be addressed and fixed in good time. This naive sentiment was also mirrored in the report of Ambassador Bell on the same subject. Bell ascribed particular importance to the Guatemalan Government’s attempts to form a unified political party, the PID (Institutional Democratic Party), by uniting the PR and the MLN with the Military coalition.¹⁴⁰ It is difficult to understand how creating a system with one party that dominated the government could be seen as a step toward constitutionality.

The US perspective on Guatemala’s development of democracy was clearly misguided but their assessment of the insurgent situation and the Guatemalan ability to deal with it were accurate. No increased aid or new programs to aid the Guatemalan military were underway by the end of 1964. As far as the US was concerned the guerilla problem remained localized in the northeast, and the Guatemalan forces were judged to be capable of dealing with the problem over time.¹⁴¹ There was still fear of Cuban

¹³⁹ NSA 00191, Report to the Special Group on Counter-Insurgency by Thomas Mann, “IDP Progress Report,” December/2/1964.

¹⁴⁰ NSA 00185, Telegram from Ambassador Bell to the State Department, “IDP Progress Report,” October/21/1964.

¹⁴¹ NSA 00190, Telegram to State Department from Guatemalan Embassy, “Guerilla Expansion Not Significant,” November/4/1964.

involvement, just no serious evidence of any Cuban action except for the training of some guerillas in Cuba the previous year and the supply of some weapons.¹⁴² While the US thought that the Guatemalan military was in control of the guerilla situation, there was still doubt about the ability of the police to be effective; it was regularly stated in reports that police training and equipment was not being used effectively. By 1965 the US still perceived the Peralta regime as a step forward for Guatemalan stability; the closer the country got to having an election that façade the US believed in would become harder and harder to believe in as the political divisions in Guatemala became more apparent.

Near the end of 1964 Ambassador Bell was positive that the multi-party coalition behind the new state party, the PID, would be a positive force for the stability of Guatemala. That he was mistaken was clear by February 24th 1965 when the government of Guatemala declared a state of siege in order to postpone elections because the military could not decide on a candidate. The problem of political fragmentation became a big enough issue by January of 1965 that it was noted in a report to the Secretary of State. The inability of the various factions within the military to pick a candidate to run for president broke up the PID coalition from within. This division and weakness within the military half of the PID encouraged the MLN and PR to drop out of the coalition.¹⁴³ The approach of presidential elections created a tense political atmosphere. Every faction

¹⁴² NSA 00186, State Department Telegram to Guatemalan Embassy, "Question About Cuban Involvement," October/22/1964.

¹⁴³ NSA 00193, State Department Intelligence and Research Report by Thomas Hughes, "The Situation in Guatemala," January/12/1965.

was attempting to work towards the goal of its representative being allowed to run in the election that was set for September 15th. This growing political competition shattered any hope the military had of its PID party taking control. And so the state of siege was declared and the elections postponed. Previous declarations of siege had been as a result of sudden massive political disturbances, like the original MR-13 rebellion, or the coup that overthrew Ydigoras. However, in this case the state of siege, which was very similar to declaring martial law in that it temporarily suspended several individual freedoms and gave the government more power, had a purely political motivation.¹⁴⁴ A press conference of Peralta's several months after the declaration, mentioned a vague plot against the government and the usual problems with guerillas and communists.¹⁴⁵ It was clear even to the embassy, which supported Peralta, that there was no sufficient cause for the declaration except for political purposes.

The state of siege and surrounding political unrest gave rise to more guerilla violence. Subversive activity was on the rise, and anti-government forces were using two new strategies in 1965. A new focus on attacking US installations and personnel in Guatemala began to develop. Insurgents also began to kidnap wealthy people in order to raise money and spread terror. This was even more successful. The PGT began making threats against US personnel and installations, and planning bombings. On February 10th Col. Houser the chief of the US army mission came under fire while driving in

¹⁴⁴ NSA 00197, Telegram to the State Department from the Guatemalan Embassy, "State of Siege Declared," February/24/1965.

¹⁴⁵ NSA 00201, Report to the Department of State, "Peralta Discusses Subversion in Press Conference," May/12/1965.

Guatemala City, the second attack on US personnel in six weeks.¹⁴⁶ CIA intelligence claimed that these actions were in response to the US involvement in the Dominican Republic.¹⁴⁷ The US responded by increasing the guards at the embassy, and ensuring that all personnel working in the field were dressed in civilian clothes. The US was aware of three major kidnappings during 1965 and it was very likely that more people were taken than were reported to have been. A wealthy shop owner, a young lawyer belonging to a “good family,” and a banker were all kidnapped, and their ransom was paid to various insurgent elements.¹⁴⁸ Both FAR and the PGT were involved in kidnappings, and both organizations profited from the significant influx of capital that came from these hostage situations, from \$60,000 to 1\$00,000 dollars per person.¹⁴⁹ This strategy also severely demoralized the wealthy and middle-class population of Guatemala, spreading fear and terror.¹⁵⁰ Kidnapping was not only effective against the population; it weakened Peralta’s position significantly. The growth of kidnappings gave the political right like the MLN and other conservative elites the excuse they needed to apply more pressure on the Peralta regime and bring it very close to collapse.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Department of the Army Communication, “Report on Recent Attack,” February/9/1965, Guatemala country file, NSF, box 54, LBJ Library.

¹⁴⁷ NSA 00203, CIA Report to the White House Situation Room, “Guatemalan Communist Terrorist Plans,” May/17/1965.

¹⁴⁸ NSA 00219, Telegram from Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, “Reactions to Increased Terrorist Activity,” November/11/1965; NSA 00223, Telegram From Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, “Kidnapping and Public Worries,” November/24/1965; NSA 00229, Telegram from Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, “December Kidnapping,” December/4/1965.

¹⁴⁹ NSA 00240, Report by Peter F. Costello Chief Public Safety Advisor, “Operational Resume of Terrorist Kidnapping and Police Activity to Counter,” December/17/1965.

¹⁵⁰ NSA 00233, Telegram to the State Department from the Guatemalan Embassy, “Kidnapping Information,” December/6/1965.

¹⁵¹ NSA 00232, State Department Intelligence and Research report by Thomas Hughes, “Guatemalan Regime in Serious Trouble,” December/7/1965.

The Peralta regime was once again under the threat of a coup, this time organized by the former MLN presidential candidate Miguel Angel Ponciano. The combination of the successful kidnapping strategy and Ponciano's personal hatred of Peralta inspired this plot. "They (MLN) are clearly highly bitter against chief of government and personalize all present difficulties in terms of what they call his stupidity, incompetence, and stubbornness."¹⁵² It is important to realize that in the relatively small community that comprised the Guatemalan elite, there were tensions that did not necessarily have anything to do with policy or politics. Despite these pressures on the government of Guatemala, Peralta Azurdia and Ambassador Mein were both very confident in the government's ability to maintain power. There were fears from higher in the State Department. A memorandum from William G. Bowdler of the National Security Council to Mr. Bundy, the special assistant to the President for national security affairs, illustrates that other representative of the US were very worried about the possibility of a coup. Mr. Bowdler wanted to push for an OAS presence in Guatemala. Mein refused to broach the subject with Peralta, ensuring Bowdler that Peralta would not want outside interference and that the government was secure. Despite the clearly fraudulent assembly elections in May of 1964 Mein still did not want to go against Peralta's wishes.¹⁵³ This incident illuminated how members of the US diplomatic community within a country were more sympathetic to the aims and perspectives of the government they were

¹⁵² Telegram from the Guatemalan Embassy to the Secretary of State, "Report on Discussion with MLN," December/14/1965, Guatemala country file, NSF, box 54, LBJ Library.

¹⁵³ Memorandum from William G. Bowdler to McGeorge Bundy, "Guatemalan Situation," December/21/1965, Guatemala country file, NSF, box 54, LBJ Library.

dealing with. Ambassador Mein and previously Ambassador Bell consistently were more sympathetic to Guatemalan desires than US officials in Washington.

It would be easy to just emphasize the challenges facing the Peralta administration by the end of 1965, but his administration was successful in combating the guerillas' previous strategies by this point. While the government had not adjusted to deal with the kidnappings, Operations Limpieza and Jabali illustrate the growing sophistication and ability of the Guatemalan military. Operation Jabali was a weeklong operation conducted by the Zacapa brigade. The Guatemalan military managed to successfully search the countryside. They killed 23 guerillas and took another 25 suspects prisoner.¹⁵⁴ This marks a significant improvement in the success of government patrols, which up to this point had received equal or significant losses after encountering guerillas while on patrol. In addition to this successful rural action, the military's ability to deal with an urban insurgency began to develop. Operation Limpieza was focused on cordoning off a section of the city with known insurgent activity and weeding out the enemy. The realization that the National police did not have significant manpower to manage urban areas led to their cooperation with the Judicial police and the US in planning operations. While this operation was not as marked a success as the rural campaign it was significant because of how the government forces were learning and adapting to combat the threat of urban war.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ NSA 00220, Guatemalan Embassy to the State Department, "Weekly Situation Report," November/22/1965, while the details of this operation can be questioned and are in the report, the perception continued that Peralta was successful in combating the guerillas.

¹⁵⁵ NSA 00240, Report by Peter F. Costello Chief Public Safety Advisor, "Operational Resume of Terrorist Kidnapping and Police Activity to Counter," December/17/1965, Operation Limpieza was originally organized by John Longan, a US military advisor.

Both these new strategies' success relied heavily on the new intelligence gathering capabilities that the US was developing, and the better organization that was being instituted through US assistance. The US instituted centralized intelligence gathering operations which enabled the rural forces to have a better idea where to find their targets, and the previously disorganized and unprofessional police forces relied on new cooperative skills taught them by the US to manage large urban operations. These two operations illustrated that there was some merit to the idea that the Peralta regime would be able to hold on to its position, however the political environment in Guatemala was still firmly against Peralta and it was only a matter of time until elections had to be held.

The PR underwent an important change that affected the stability of Guatemala. Mario Mendez Montenegro, the longtime leader of the party and its presidential candidate, was shot in November of 1965, and his brother Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro assumed his place in the party leadership. Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro had not been involved in politics since he withdrew from the profession in protest following the murder of Colonel Arana in 1949. He served in a variety of positions under the Arevalo administration, and since his withdrawal from politics he had been practicing law and serving as the dean of the law school at San Carlos University.¹⁵⁶ He was perceived as an intelligent and capable individual, but the US was still concerned about his ability to manage the party without recent experience. This upheaval in the most stable and politically acceptable leftist party also worried the US. The possibility

¹⁵⁶ NSA 00217, Telegram from Guatemalan Embassy to the Secretary of State, "Biographic Information of JCMM," November/3/1965.

that the murder of Mario Montenegro was a political assassination created the fear that the PR would radicalize in response. Julio Mendez Montenegro was in a difficult position, forced to balance the sudden increase in political support from the left in response to his brother's murder without causing the MLN or the PID to fear the growth of support by the left.¹⁵⁷

During the Peralta years, the US influence in Guatemala developed significantly. Two of the major developments were the posting of a new ambassador and the arrival of US public safety advisor John P. Longan. Ambassador John G. Mein was a relatively typical representative of the State Department; he went to college at George Washington University and had done graduate work at American University. He was appointed to the Foreign Service in 1942 and served in posts at Rio de Janeiro, Rome, Oslo, and Djakarta. He did not stand out as representing any particular US perspective on Latin America, but he had received the meritorious service award for his work on Indonesian affairs where very similar issues to those in Guatemala faced US diplomats.¹⁵⁸ On September 3 1965, John Mein became the US Ambassador to Guatemala.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ NSA 00218, Telegram from Guatemalan Embassy to Secretary of State, "PR Political Situation," November/5/1965.

¹⁵⁸ Bradley R. Simpson, *Economists with Guns: authoritarian development and US-Indonesian relations, 1960-1968* (Stanford, 2008), describes the complexities of the Indonesian situation during the same period, where US officials attempted to ensure continued US support by working with the local elites to combat a guerilla insurgency; this was only moderately successful and US involvement created more problems than it solved. Yet it is a very similar parallel to Guatemala in which US officials worked with a military government to ensure a non-communist government remained in power and illustrates the continuity of Cold War foreign policy. While Simpson does not mention ambassador Mein, he could be a link between the massacre of Indonesian communists and Guatemalan counter-terrorism; more work needs to be done on this.

¹⁵⁹ NSA 00215, Department of State Memorandum for the Press, "John Mein Ambassador to Guatemala," September/3/1965

On November 24th 1965 Ambassador Mein received a request from Chief of State Peralta requesting expert assistance in advising Guatemalan law enforcement on techniques to combat kidnapping and extortion.¹⁶⁰ This request was promptly sent to the State Department. John Longan, a public safety advisor stationed in Caracas, Venezuela was sent to Guatemala to assess the situation along with Pete Costello who took over the public safety section of AID.¹⁶¹ Longan's role in Guatemala has often been portrayed in a very negative light. Out of all the public safety advisors and US military personnel stationed in Guatemala, he has been singled out as the person most responsible for training the Guatemalan military in brutal counter-insurgency tactics. Greg Grandin in particular claims that he trained an elite unit. "In March 1966 four months after Longan's training, it kidnapped, tortured, and executed as many as thirty people."¹⁶² Yet, Grandin does not mention the name of this unit or cite any sources for this information.¹⁶³ While Longan did train and organize the Guatemalan military in order to help them to better respond to urban terror threats, there is no evidence to say that he taught Guatemalans to murder and torture.

Every regime since the 1954 coup incorporated political oppression, including the unwarranted imprisonment and sometimes murder of political rivals or opposition. It is unfair to blame Longan for Guatemala's violent counter terror policies when the main

¹⁶⁰ NSA 00222, Telegram from Guatemalan Embassy to Secretary of State, "Request for Assistance and Update," November/24/1965.

¹⁶¹ NSA 00230, From Guatemala City to Mr. Vaughn (US Coordinator for the Alliance for Progress) and Ambassador Burrows (Honduras), "Thanks for Sending Longan/ Update on Situation," December/6/1965.

¹⁶² Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago, 2004), P.11-12 and 73-104.

¹⁶³ It is possible that Longan discussed this in his memoirs which Grandin had access to, but this information was not repeated in the sources that this researcher looked at.

issues he was concerned with and reported on were organizational. In his official assessment of the Guatemalan situation he had three clear recommendations: that police agencies had to start working together, that this process should be coordinated from the upper levels of Guatemalan government, and that police actions and raids on suspect areas in Guatemala City should start immediately. The last major recommendation was to centralize intelligence gathering so that all information would go to one location where it could be analyzed and acted on.¹⁶⁴ Nowhere in that report did he recommend torture or murder, and there is no mention of his training a particular unit. Longan was singled out as the inspiration behind Guatemalan terror tactics, yet in this case he did little more than recommend a better police organization, something US advisors had been proposing since 1956.

The emphasis of US policy on topics other than military assistance should be clear. There was more US attention to the subject of police training and efficiency, than there was on military training. The Public Safety Program was a component of the Alliance for Progress that received significant funding and had a larger impact on Guatemala. Despite its lofty title this program focused mainly on creating an efficient and modern police force in Guatemala, and most of the recommendations for funding dealt with improving organization and maintaining equipment.¹⁶⁵ US aid to the Guatemalan police force came in the form of supplies as well as training. Other authors often emphasize the supply of small arms, tear gas, and other riot control equipment as

¹⁶⁴ NSA 00244, Report from John P. Longan to Byron Engle, Director Office of Public Safety, "Recommendations Concerning Counter-Kidnapping in Guatemala," January/4/1966.

¹⁶⁵ NSA 00153, Telegram to Guatemalan Embassy from the Agency for International Development, "Public Safety Program," October/16/1963.

examples of US support for harsh military police action. Yet the supply of revolvers to equip a police force is clearly different from providing napalm to the military. US assistance consistently focused on avoiding excessive violence. US officials even commented that by giving the police pistols it ensured they didn't use machine guns instead.¹⁶⁶ The overall goal of training police forces was to create a more professional, modern, and less violent method of law enforcement.

Another key factor behind US actions in Guatemala was a growing awareness by the US public of the situation there. Several specials on network television highlighted the events happening in Guatemala and emphasized the role of US involvement. Several news articles also received enough attention to be discussed in diplomatic circles. The US government was very concerned about how the public perceived its actions abroad. A report from the State Department to the embassy pointed out that the NBC program "The Science of Spying" intimated a strong US involvement in Guatemala. That the State Department thought this important enough to inform the embassy shows the US government's caution when it came to how its actions abroad were perceived.¹⁶⁷ In July of 1966, the acting Secretary of State wrote a letter to Thomas Miglautsch, the vice chairman of the Wisconsin governor's Committee on Human Rights, in response to a letter questioning issues of US involvement in Guatemala following an NBC documentary "The Undeclared War." This letter assured Mr. Miglautsch that the program provided a more dramatic picture of issues in Guatemala and that the US was

¹⁶⁶ NSA 00022, Letter from ICA- Mr. Atwood and ARA- Mr. Rubottom, "Overseas Internal Security Program," June/03/1957.

¹⁶⁷ NSA 00200, Telegram from the Department of State to the Guatemalan Embassy, "NBC Program on Guatemala," May/6/1965.

firmly committed to aiding Guatemala through the Alliance for Progress to gain a stable democracy.¹⁶⁸ The fact that the State Department was worried about how US involvement was being portrayed on television illuminates its desire to maintain a neutral position in the public's eyes. This awareness of public opinion did not have a profound impact on US Guatemalan relations during the 1960's, but as the crisis in Guatemala continued it would receive more attention abroad. What should be noted is that US policy was aware of possible negative attention and wanted to avoid it.

From 1963 to 1966 Guatemala had a military government that supported the US, fought against Communism, and claimed to be working towards open elections and democracy. During those three years the Guatemalan Government slowly inched towards elections reluctantly, and focused a great deal of attention on combating several guerilla insurgencies. The military government was employing a holding action, not really moving forward or backwards, just attempting to maintain the status quo. The US mimicked this in their relations with Guatemala even though there were significant changes within the US foreign policy apparatus. The US policy towards Latin America and Guatemala remained the same. The amount of funding remained consistent, diplomatic communications continued to emphasize the same issues, and the overall US perspective towards Latin America remained the same.

Developments in Guatemala did not have a huge impact on US foreign policy, instead illustrating a consistent level of interest and involvement. While Johnson's

¹⁶⁸ Letter from Robert M. Sayre to Thomas J. Miglautsch, "Reply About NBC Program," July/1/1966, WHCF, subject file CO-97, Box 37, LBJ Library.

National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) #297 was far clearer and more specific than Kennedy's on Latin American military aid, it was not radically different. Whereas Kennedy in NSAM #2 made a quick statement to focus attention on Latin American military aid, Johnson's NSAM #297 examined in detail what kind of aid should be given, and included information about encouraging democratic behavior from Latin American countries. He presented seven general objectives; among those were the maintenance of a realistic military establishment, an emphasis on civic action and internal security missions, avoidance of sophisticated prestige equipment like jet aircraft, and "Emphasis in training and by other means on the role of the military in a modern democratic society."¹⁶⁹ The emphasis on realistic military establishment and prestige equipment illustrates Johnson's desire to help Latin American nations build better militaries but only to the point necessary to fight internal communist insurgencies. There was a focus on the role of the military in a democratic society, implying that Johnson was more focused on ensuring that the military power did not destroy democratic institutions. It is apparent that the LBJ administration was concerned with the region's ability to maintain democratic governments while providing internal security against the threat of Communism. The key dissimilarity in Johnson's policy was the lack of emphasis on counter-guerilla or counter-terrorist training and operations. This shift in focus was not only in Latin America, but also in Vietnam, and within the military organization, itself much of the Special Forces organizational apparatus that Kennedy created began to decline after his death. While this major component of Kennedy's strategy for Latin

¹⁶⁹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, South and Central America*, ed. David Geyer, David Herschler and Edward Keefer, Vol. XXXI (Washington DC, 2004), P.30, NSAM #297.

America was less important to this administration, the emphasis on internal defense and conversely police training continued to be a central issue. Combating communist insurgencies continued to worry the US, but the ineffectiveness of guerilla movements encouraged policy makers and shifted focus away from them.¹⁷⁰

The situation was further complicated by the only significant change in US policy, which was to not support any new regime changes in Guatemala. Despite the decision to support the Peralta administration after they seized power, the US informed Ponciano that they would not support him seizing power. Ambassador to Panama Mr. Vaughn in a communication with ambassador Mein advised “you should make clear to him (Ponciano) that the US would not find it easy to cooperate with a Guatemalan government that was the result of a coup.”¹⁷¹ Mr. Mein did follow up on this advice making it clear to the MLN by 1966 that the United States would not support another coup. What had changed between the Peralta coup and 1966 to discourage US approval? The Peralta regime was showing some signs of success and the US was convinced that democracy would be forthcoming. While both Kennedy and Johnson administrations maintained similar policies toward Guatemala, and the overall objective of stability remained central.

What about the economic aid? Again there was consistency between these two administrations, and the State Department’s distant position is clear in the amount and type of aid provided. Johnson’s economic aid to Guatemala had more time to fluctuate,

¹⁷⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, South and Central America*, ed. David Geyer, David Herschler and Edward Keefer, Vol. XXXI, national intelligence estimate, February/17/1966, P.92.

¹⁷¹ NSA 00239, Telegram to Ambassador Mein from Ambassador Vaughn, “Action: Possible Coup,” December/15/1965.

so there was a strikingly low figure, \$3.8 million dollars of aid in 1966. Yet, his high of \$78.9 million dollars in 1969 was three times as much as Kennedy's highest number. Part of the reason for that high figure though was the intensity of the internal conflict in Guatemala after 1966, which motivated a greater deal of aid.¹⁷² The fact is that the Johnson administration, just like the Kennedy one, realized that the path to stability in Guatemala and Latin America as a whole would come from stable economies.¹⁷³ More funds were put into AID then MAP at any time in 1960's Guatemala. The emphasis in works like Black's *Garrison Guatemala* and Joana's *The Battle for Guatemala* is on the military material support and training that go to Guatemala, yet total annual aid never was more than three million dollars. The US training teams in Guatemala are often mentioned as a key factor in training the government counter-insurgency forces to be the most efficient in the isthmus; for any given year, however, there were only two such units in the country. There were consistently more US units working to train supply and maintenance personnel in the Guatemalan military, as many as seven in 1967.¹⁷⁴

Despite the interest in military development in Guatemala, the Johnson administration's economic aid was remarkably consistent from 1963 to 1966. Every year except 1966, the US provided economic assistance, of about \$13 million dollars. In 1966, the aid fell to about \$9 million dollars, but this lower figure can be explained by the uncertainty over the Guatemalan elections and whether the new government would

¹⁷² Caesar Donato Sereseres, *Military Development, and the United States Military Assistance Program for Latin America: the case of Guatemala, 1961-1969*, P.188.

¹⁷³ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, South and Central America*, ed. David Geyer, David Herschler and Edward Keefer, Vol. XXXI, memorandum from deputy assistant secretary of state for inter American affairs (Sayre) to Bundy, June/12/1965.

¹⁷⁴ Caesar Donato Sereseres, *Military Development, and the United States Military Assistance Program for Latin America: the case of Guatemala, 1961-1969*, P.210.

prove to be stable.¹⁷⁵ There are several key differences in Johnson's aid to Guatemala; his administration provided fewer Ex-Im bank loans with only \$4.3 million during his first three years. He consistently provided more funds for the Inter-American highway, with \$4.8 million dollars in his first three years as compared to Kennedy's \$1.5 million. The aid he provided for the Peace Corps remained consistent after the initial investment of \$1.2 million in 1963, half a million dollars was provided each year after that. The department of agriculture provided \$5 million dollars total aid over three years, twice as much as the previous administration.¹⁷⁶ What Johnson did differently when it came to providing aid to Guatemala was that he provided a wider variety of assistance directed at more problems. Kennedy provided most of his administrations aid in large lump sum grants or loans directly to the government itself. While neither of these aid strategies was wrong or right, in the end neither was effective at stabilizing Guatemala. So there were some divisions in how these two administrations addressed the issue of Guatemalan aid but they were on a more technical level, while larger goals remained the same.

Guatemala was changing. Pressure from various political elements against the administration, and pressure from the US was pushing the country toward elections. Head of state Peralta Azurdia chose the date for elections, March 6th 1966. "Guatemala was heading into another political crisis. The ingredients are all too familiar in Latin America: a small conservative oligarchy exercising economic and military power

¹⁷⁵ Caesar Donato Sereseres, *Military Development, and the United States Military Assistance Program for Latin America: the case of Guatemala, 1961-1969*, P.188.

¹⁷⁶ Data on US foreign aid USAID, "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants/ Greenbook," <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/> (accessed March 22, 2011).

confronts a reformist political opposition enjoying wide but ill-organized support from an impoverished electorate. We believe that a military coup, either before or shortly after the elections, is likely.”¹⁷⁷ This CIA assessment concisely lays out the problem, that Peralta was on his way out and the alternatives were not attractive to the conservative elite who held most of the power in Guatemala. Due to the popularity of the PR as the only leftist political option and the likelihood of Mendez Montenegro being elected, the US was concerned. This fear was based on the events of the previous coup in 1963 which occurred because of the possible election of a politician from the left. It seemed to the US that events were about to repeat themselves. The question remained, would Guatemala have free, legitimate elections, and if so would there be a coup when Mendez Montenegro won?¹⁷⁸ Despite US and Guatemalan fears of instability, the country moved forward and presidential elections took place.

The strong fear that the populace on the right or the left would not accept the results if Mendez Montenegro were elected, or if the PID remained in power, left the US planning for every eventuality and expecting the worst. Juan Dios Aguilar, the PID candidate, could not win the election without arousing suspicion of fraud or government impropriety. The MLN candidate Colonel Ponciano ran on a firmly anti-communist ticket, the opposite of Mendez Montenegro who, while being on the moderate left, was still perceived by the MLN as a precursor to Communism. “Each is unacceptable,

¹⁷⁷ NSA 00248, CIA Special Memorandum Office of National Assessments, “Guatemala’s Dilemma,” January/18/1966.

¹⁷⁸ Memorandum for Bob Komer from Bowdler, “Guatemalan Elections,” March/15/1966, Guatemala country file, NSF, box 54, LBJ Library.

personally or ideologically, to at least one important segment of society.”¹⁷⁹ Despite these tensions the elections occurred in a legitimate manner and on July 1, Mendez Montenegro and his Vice President Clemente Marroquin Rojas were elected.

The structure of the Guatemalan electoral system reveals the relative validity of the 1966 election. The Guatemalan elections were democratic in form, the right and obligation to vote was granted to all literate citizens over the age of 18, and was optional for those who were illiterate. Members of the armed forces, police officers, and the mentally disabled were barred from voting. A secret ballot was used and there were precautions in place to prevent plural voting.¹⁸⁰ In addition to this system, the fact that the PR won the election was a positive sign that relatively free elections had occurred even though many political parties could not participate. The military government of Azurdia Peralta briefly imprisoned Mendez Montenegro’s brother after it seized power, and the PR was disliked by rightist elements of Guatemalan society, yet it was still allowed to participate despite this history of animosity, implying a significant level of legitimacy. According to an assessment of the elections 44% of the votes went to the PR party. The growth of urbanization in Guatemala allowed the PR party to appeal to the newly urban masses and their desires for reform. This popular position combined with the dislike of the state run PID and elitist nature of the MLN won the PR a plurality at the polls.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ NSA 00262, CIA Intelligence Memorandum, “Guatemala on the Eve of Election,” March/4/1966

¹⁸⁰ Institute for Comparative Study of Political Systems, *Guatemala Election Fact book: March 6, 1966*, ed. Henry Wells and Marta Cehelsky (Washington DC, 1966).

¹⁸¹ Kenneth F. Johnson, *The Guatemalan Presidential Election of March 6, 1966: an analysis* (Washington DC, 1967).

There is also a strong argument against the validity of the 1966 election, “Fraudulent elections would be no surprise. Mendez Montenegro of the PR recently has professed that if the fraud is not obvious he will abide by the results. Ponciano of the MLN probably will also.”¹⁸² No situation in which the principal candidates of the election were willing to accept fraud can be seen as the optimal environment for democracy. In addition to this willingness of the candidates to allow fraud, it was necessary for the members of the PR, PID, and military to sign an agreement that would allow the PR to take power following their success in the election. Secret deals are not how legitimate democracies operate. An important component of this agreement was that the military would nominate the Minister of Defense. Furthermore, the new government had to agree to continue fighting communists and the guerilla threat.¹⁸³ These elections were clearly not legitimate by the standards of western democracies, but given the limits imposed by the military it was probably as close as they could have come to democracy.

While the procedure of the elections was legitimate and Mendez Montenegro did represent a majority of the population, the Guatemalan military still held on to a significant amount of power behind the scenes. It was only through their good graces that Mendez Montenegro was allowed to take office. Despite the not so pristine nature of the new democratic government, the new administration appeared to have the support of a plurality of the people, and the military was willing to tolerate it, so the US declared

¹⁸² NSA 00262, CIA Intelligence Memorandum, “Guatemala on the Eve of Election,” March/4/1966.

¹⁸³ NSA 00268, Telegram from Guatemalan Embassy to Secretary of State, “Political Agreement Following Elections,” March/12/1966.

the March elections a victory for democracy. This election would be the last relatively legitimate democratic process in Guatemala until the mid-1980's. Mendez Montenegro winning the election began a new phase of US-Guatemalan relations, in which the US treated the new government as legitimate, putting an end to the suspicion and pressure that had been directed at the Peralta regime and ushering in a period when the US believed that Guatemala had the ability to improve as a nation.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ NSA 00278, Memo for LBJ, "Electoral Picture in Guatemala," April, 5, 1966.

CHAPTER IV
MENDEZ MONTENEGRO AND LYNDON JOHNSON, 1966-1969: THE
EMERGENCE OF COUNTER TERROR

As a result of the 1966 elections, the political situation in Guatemala once again changed. A political party of the center left came to power through seemingly legitimate elections, and the military had given up its control to a new civilian government. This development had a profound impact on the extreme right, and further radicalized that element of Guatemalan society. The election of Mendez Montenegro was supposed to represent a Guatemalan return to democracy and constitutionality. However, the early years of his administration would involve violence from the right and left that would foreshadow the extreme violence of the 1980's. On the surface, it appeared that the situation in Guatemala was improving, but the country was in reality moving further towards repression and violence.

Reactions to the election varied across the political spectrum. Immediately following the 1966 election, the Guatemalan right responded by putting pressure on Enrique Peralta Azurdia to annul the elections or step down so someone else could.¹⁸⁵ The victory of the PR (Partido Revolucionario) party motivated this move against the established order by the right. The MLN (Movimiento Liberacion Nacional) thought that the PR was a dangerously leftist group. In reality the PR party was clearly closer to the

¹⁸⁵ NSA 00266, Memorandum from William Bowdler to President Johnson, "Guatemalan Situation," March/10/1966.

center with the PGT and guerillas on the far left. Despite the moderate reality of PR politics, the MLN began plotting to remove the new president by any means necessary. The MLN worked on plans with ranking military officers and tried to contact the heads of other nations like Honduras and Nicaragua, all in order to combat the growing communist threat supposedly presented by the PR. While the MLN certainly considered the PR a leftist threat, the long-standing divisions in Guatemalan society and the animosity between these two groups should also be taken into account when determining the motivations behind the MLN actions. The other important action taken by the MLN in response to the 1966 elections was the formation of a civilian terrorist organization known as Mano Blanco (The White Hand). This organization was developed to oppose the new government and to terrorize communists and their sympathizers. During 1966, this organization focused on psychological warfare, harassing people and exploding a few bombs.¹⁸⁶ The organization would change and develop into a far more brutal and deadly extension of rightist policies as the decade continued.

Mendez Montenegro in his inaugural address offered the hand of peace to the communist guerillas and terrorists, asking them to cease hostilities and work with the new government. He continued by saying that if the guerillas perceived his offer of peace as a sign of weakness, his hand of peace would become a mailed fist.¹⁸⁷ From the moment his presidency began Mendez Montenegro was put in the position of trying to balance the extremes of Guatemalan society; he had to appease the hardliners on the right and try to bring a peaceful conclusion to the guerilla violence. Moreover, while

¹⁸⁶ NSA 00309, CIA Intelligence Memorandum, "Guatemala a Current Appraisal," October/8/1966.

¹⁸⁷ NSA 00292, State Department Report, "Security Review," July/5/1966.

appeasing the two diametrically opposite political groups in Guatemala, he had to work towards the reforms the country desperately needed. He started out strong with a good speech but encountered problems quickly, and spent his first 100 days in office trying to organize the government, get it staffed, and create a budget.¹⁸⁸ While these were all important issues to address and important to building a more stable Guatemala it led to him being criticized as a do nothing, and gave the MLN the excuse they needed to continue plotting against his administration. Despite the slower pace with which his administration developed, Mendez Montenegro was trying to make progress and remain in power despite pressure from the right and left. “Mendez in his energetic, at times angry radio/TV address on September 7 did much to restore public confidence. He berated those who were impatient with his democratic (and therefore slower) procedures, and threatened to act against subversives on both political extremes.”¹⁸⁹ He managed to maintain a modicum of stability in the early days of his administration by appeasing and threatening both ends of the political spectrum. However this careful balance did not last. By June, both FAR and MR-13 had refused the peace offer and in response to a growing wave of violence, Mendez Montenegro suspended constitutional guarantees and began a new campaign against the guerillas.¹⁹⁰

Prior to the election of Mendez Montenegro the Peralta administration was involved in forcefully repressing any communist opposition. This included arrests and also presumably executions. In response to a series of disappearances in March of 1966,

¹⁸⁸ NSA 00314, Guatemalan Embassy assessment, “First 100 Days of Mendez regime,” November/17/1966.

¹⁸⁹ NSA 00302, State Department INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) Thomas L Huges, “President Mendez Holds His Own,” September/22/1966.

¹⁹⁰ NSA 00311, Note to Walt Rostow from WG Bowdler, “Guatemala,” November/3/1966.

the FAR kidnapped Information Secretary Baltazar Morales and Supreme Court President Augusto de Leon and demanded the return of 28 missing PGT officials. The Peralta administration declared a state of siege in response to these kidnappings.¹⁹¹ Despite these worsening tensions between guerilla forces and the Peralta government, the election and following inauguration happened without interruption from the far left. After Mendez Montenegro's inaugural address, the guerilla forces ceased hostilities in order to wait and see what the right would do in response to the election. Their general plan centered on the belief that the MLN or the military would intervene to stop the PR from taking power. Such a coup would have given the guerillas a significant boost in public opinion and support, allowing them to start their operations again from a more powerful position.¹⁹² When no coup occurred and it was apparent that they would have to deal with the Mendez Montenegro government, the guerilla forces declared their intentions. In a joint statement on July 16 the FAR and PGT declared that "the new Guatemalan government is under the tutelage of North American imperialism, and FAR will give new impetus to its politico-military struggle for the Guatemalan revolution."¹⁹³ Yon Sosa's response reaffirmed MR-13's armed struggle, stating "to the death with capitalism,"¹⁹⁴ and rejected the peace offer. While the far left did not immediately oppose the new government, after it became clear that no new advantages could be gained from the new situation, they soon reverted to the strategy they were accustomed to and continued to fight a guerilla war against the government of Guatemala. Despite

¹⁹¹ NSA 00282, State Department INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) Thomas L Huges, "Terrorist Kidnapping Triggers State of Siege in Guatemala," May/11/1966.

¹⁹² NSA 292, State Department report, "Security Review," July/5/1966.

¹⁹³ NSA 294, ARA notes, "Guatemalan Insurgents Reject New Presidents Peace Offer," July/26/1966.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

the more moderate government of Mendez Montenegro, the far left still believed the only chance for real change lay in a revolution.

The election and subsequent political reactions were not the only important events that occurred in 1966. On the international front the Havana Tricontinental conference took place in January. This was a meeting of revolutionary leaders from Africa, Asia, and Latin America to discuss their struggles against imperialism and plan future action. This conference developed out of the national liberation movements of Africa and Asia, growing to include Latin America creating the OSPAAAL (organizacion de solidaridad con los pueblos de asia, africa y america latina, organization of solidarity with the people of Africa, Asia, and Latin America) at the Havana conference. While this organization was ostensibly about addressing imperialism, it was also seen as an extension of the Soviet and communist expansionist policy.¹⁹⁵ It illuminated some of the clear divisions, which had developed between communist countries. The conference was representative of Cuba's increasing desire and willingness to be involved in spreading revolution to other countries, a policy that brought it into conflict with its benefactor, the Soviet Union. The Soviets were trying to calm tensions with the US and build ties with Latin American countries. Cuba and its representative, Che Guevara, were spreading revolution in Africa and Latin America. By the end of the year, Che was in Bolivia. Despite that venture's eventual failure this

¹⁹⁵ Subcommittee to investigate the administration of the internal security act and other internal security laws, "The Tricontinental Conference of Africa, Asian, and Latin American People: a staff study," *Latin American Studies*, US government printing office, 1966, <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/tricontinental.htm> (accessed April 21, 2011).

conference illuminated Cuba's commitment to revolution and the major communist power's lack of commitment to the third world.¹⁹⁶ As with most political meetings the primary purpose of this conference was to talk, no actions were directly planned but ideology was shared and the spread of revolution was encouraged. The Tricontinental conference also had a direct connection to people and events in Guatemala.

During the Tricontinental conference Guatemala's leftist revolution garnered public international attention from its communist supporters for the first time. Luis Augusto Trucios Lima, the commander of FAR, attended the Tricontinental conference. Fidel Castro's ties to the Guatemalan guerillas were made very clear in his final address to the conference, which was very positive towards FAR. Castro commented that Trucios Lima had saved the revolution in Guatemala and extolled his leadership abilities. However, in that same address, he openly criticized Yon Sosa and MR-13, claiming that the organization had been taken over by Trotskyite elements.¹⁹⁷ That speech, combined with the fact that Yon Sosa had not been invited to the conference, showed that Castro clearly favored FAR and had no intention of giving any more aid to MR-13. This conference marked the final split between these two guerilla groups, who had been trying to work together on and off for most of the decade. After MR-13 lost the support of Cuba, the already weakening guerilla force continued to decline and eventually ceased

¹⁹⁶ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill, 2002).

¹⁹⁷ NSA 00258, Department of State Telegram from the Guatemalan Embassy, "Monthly Guerilla Report Jan," February/16/1966.

to exist as a viable force in Guatemala.¹⁹⁸ FAR was at the forefront of Communist revolutions in the region yet their success would not last long.

A series of deaths in the political structure of the far left severely damaged their position in Guatemala. Victor Manuel Gutierrez Garbin, the head of the PGT, returned to Guatemala in order to work towards a legalization of his party and to support government reform. He was arrested and died while being tortured by the police.¹⁹⁹ This motivated a large upwelling of support against the government but left the PGT without one of its longtime leaders. In addition, Trucios Lima died in a car accident on October 2nd, leaving FAR temporarily without a leader and giving the government a morale boost because Trucios had been one of the most feared and respected guerilla leaders. Julio Cesar Macias, also known as Cesar Montes, took over as leader of the organization after Trucios Lima's death.²⁰⁰ The FAR started a new wave of violence in November of 1966.²⁰¹ Several fuel tanks for the power company Empresa Electrica were destroyed in the culminating action of this growing wave of terrorism. This pressure from the left, combined with a growing number of bombings, murders and political propaganda by the

¹⁹⁸ Fidel Castro, "Marxist Internet Archive," *At the Closing session of the Tricontinental Conference*, January 15, 1966, <http://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1966/01/15.htm> (accessed May 20, 2011); David A. Crain, "Guatemalan Revolutionaries and Havana's Ideological offensive of 1966-1968," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, May 1975: 175-205, further examines the relationships between various Communist ideologies and the revolutionary strategies employed in Latin America.

¹⁹⁹ NSA 00277, CIA Report, "Gutierrez Situation," April/1966.

²⁰⁰ NSA 00309, CIA Intelligence Memorandum, "Guatemala: a Current Appraisal," October/8/1966.

²⁰¹ NSA 00310, ARA Note, "Guatemala," October/10/1966; NSA 00311, Note to Walt Rostow, "Guatemala," November/3/1966.

MLN, motivated the Mendez Montenegro government to declare its first state of siege,²⁰² as mentioned before.

The last major development of 1966 was the emergence of campesinos (rural farmers) as a political and military force. Terrorists on the left and right spread violence throughout rural Guatemala. In addition to political terrorism, crime and violence for personal gain increased and had a large impact in rural areas. In response to the growing crime and violence, campesinos began to demonstrate and protest for peace. A large group of campesinos was involved in a protest on December 4th and shortly thereafter, the president, in conjunction with the minister of defense, authorized the rural authorities to carry arms in self-defense.²⁰³ This marked the beginning of a popular mobilization in rural Guatemala and the campesinos as a result were at the forefront of rural violence. Instead of helping stabilize the Guatemalan countryside, arming sections of the populace led to more violence.

The military response to these developments was important. As has been illustrated time and again in Guatemala, the military was the most powerful political entity. Despite doubts about whether the military would allow the new administration to take power, events proceeded in a fairly democratic manner. In spite of the upheaval that developed in the first year of the new administration, the military continued to support the government and its actions. The reality was that Mendez Montenegro was very much

²⁰² NSA 00312, Department of State Telegram to Secretary of State, "State of Siege Details," November/3/1966; NSA 00313, State Department Note, "State of Siege Declared in Guatemala," November/7/1966.

²⁰³ NSA 00323, Telegram from Embassy to Secretary of State, "Internal Security Update," December/7/1966.

aware that he had to maintain a good relationship with the military. There was no overt control by the military of the new administration. However, the defense minister's involvement in the declaration of a state of siege, the arming of campesinos, and the further development of police and counter-insurgency forces illustrated that the government was taking into account the military's perspective and desires.²⁰⁴ The Mendez Montenegro regime brought its full power to bear against violent rightist group sponsored by the MLN and the extreme left; in doing so, it reassured the military that their goal was stability.

While the Guatemalan military was satisfied with the way events were developing, the United States were still waiting to see how things would develop and were not convinced that Mendez Montenegro was doing a good job. The "monthly guerilla report" for November 1966 shows that the US understood how bad things were becoming in Guatemala. It contained a list of terrorist incidents for the month, almost every day a violent incident occurred with as many as six incidents in a day. Furthermore, these were just the events the US knew about; there were undoubtedly many unreported occurrences of leftist violence.²⁰⁵ The general assessment of Mendez Montenegro after the election was fairly cautious. The CIA determined that his ability to remain in office would depend on whether he maintained good relations with the military, assuming that in order to remain in power he would have to forego any major reforms. Finally the report concluded that it was doubtful he would be able survive in

²⁰⁴ NSA 00319, Secretary of State Night Reading, "Guatemala Army Gains Initiative," December/1/1966; NSA 00327, Telegram from Embassy to State Department, "Guatemalan Police Power Expanded," December/24/1966.

²⁰⁵ NSA 00326, Guatemalan Embassy Telegram, "Monthly Guerilla Report November," December/17/1966, see appendix for list of terrorist incidents.

office over the next two years. “His administration’s chances for accomplishing much, either in reform or in significant economic growth and development will, depend heavily upon whether it accepts substantial outside assistance -with its attendant obligations- and uses it effectively.”²⁰⁶ The last line about outside assistance illustrates the US perspective that the Guatemalan Government needed the US if it hoped to continue functioning. The US understood the inherently weak position Mendez Montenegro was in, surrounded on the left and right by extremists while being forced by political necessity to work with the military; the US would work to stabilize the nation with more economic and military assistance.

1967 was an interesting year for Guatemala. There was no one important event or development. Instead, the culmination of a decade of political division and violence took shape. In addition to the resurgence of leftist guerilla action, government and rightist terror groups began to have a significant impact on society. This was reflected in the discussions of some American officials who, while continuing to emphasize eliminating the guerilla threat, demonstrated an awareness of the threat from the right.²⁰⁷ The situation in Guatemala created a problem for US policy. The desire to aid a government they were allied with against the threat of collapse from internal conflict clashed with the possibility that the biggest threat to the Guatemalan government was not from the

²⁰⁶ State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968 South and Central America; Mexico*, ed. Edward C. Keefer, David C. Geyer and David H. Herschler, Vol. XXXI (Washington DC, 2004), CIA National Intelligence Estimate, “prospects for stability in Guatemala,” June/24/1966, P.209-210.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, memorandum from the director of the office of Central American Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American affairs, October/12/1967, P.225.

communists but from the anti-communist forces. In addition to extreme rightists, the government of Guatemala also became heavily involved in the increasing violence. “In recent months the largest number of killings in Guatemala have been carried out by clandestine elements of GOG (government of Guatemala) security forces with the approval or at least tacit permission of the President.”²⁰⁸ US policy was thus confronted with the challenge of how to adapt to the growth of government-sponsored violence.

The complicated nature of the Guatemalan counter-terror program that was emerging was difficult for US officials to understand. A majority of US personnel, both in Washington and in the embassy, were in favor of continued assistance. At the same time there were others questioning basic assumptions about the Mendez Montenegro regime: was it even in power and to what degree? The following statement illustrates a more radical assessment of the situation in Guatemala. “CIA appears to feel more strongly than we do at this time with respect to certain threatening aspects of the Guatemalan situation. The agency in recent briefings for key officials of the US government has stated that President Mendez Montenegro of Guatemala has abdicated all power to the military and is himself in the hands of extreme rightists.”²⁰⁹ The CIA thought that the government of Guatemala was completely compromised; this presents a sharp contrast to the following statement, which was in a memorandum from Walt Rostow to President Johnson. “Mendez Montenegro has tackled the insurgency problem

²⁰⁸ NSA 00334, ARA Memorandum from John R. Breen to David Bronheim, “Guatemalan Country Team Request for 324,000 for Grant Funded Safety Commodities,” May/19/1967.

²⁰⁹ NSA 00334, ARA Memorandum from John R. Breen to David Bronheim, “Guatemalan Country Team Request for 324,000 for Grant Funded Safety Commodities,” May/19/1967, Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Central American Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, October/12/1967, P.225.

with energy and has accomplished a good deal. He has welcomed our assistance and we have responded with additional help on the military and police side. Our present programs look about right. A modest increase in our rural police program is warranted and Covey Oliver (Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American affairs and US coordinator of the Alliance for Progress) will pursue this.”²¹⁰ These statements represent two completely contrary assessments of the situation in Guatemala by US government officials. One claimed the Government under Mendez Montenegro was doing well, the other that he had lost power completely. Yet, despite doubts about who was in control of the country, US policy remained consistent and focused on helping the government of Guatemala combat the leftist guerilla insurgency.

The US continued to operate in Guatemala while largely ignoring the issue of counter-terror. Nowhere is this clearer than in the records of US assistance from 1967. The total economic assistance for 1967 rose from \$9 million to \$14 million dollars, and the total military assistance rose from \$1.46 million to \$2.17 million dollars.²¹¹ The US made no attempt to alter its foreign policy or take into account the issue of rightist terror or government violence. On several occasions, embassy officials acknowledged the possible negative effects of continued clandestine counter terror efforts by the government²¹² but that understanding never quite made it to the upper echelons of the US government. Those few that were worried about conditions in Guatemala like Viron

²¹⁰ State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United State, 1964-1968 South and Central America; Mexico*, ed. Edward C. Keefer, David C. Geyer and David H. Herschler, Vol. XXXI, Memorandum from the President’s Special Assistant to LBJ, July/6/1967, P.148.

²¹¹ Data on US foreign aid USAID, "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants/ Greenbook," <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/> (accessed March 22, 2011).

²¹² NSA 00346, Telegram from Guatemalan Embassy to State Department, “Internal Security Assessment,” October/10/1967.

P. Vaky the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, were not able to convince others that the traditional concerns about guerillas were less important in Guatemala than the escalating right-wing violence. “It shows what a democratic, popular government can do when it is determined to take firm action.”²¹³ The previous statement by Walt Rostow in regards to a report on Mendez Montenegro’s success illustrates the disconnect between the understanding of the situation by many of those officials in Washington. The description of the Mendez Montenegro administration as a purely democratic institution and the fact that violent counter-terror was ignored shows US policy makers not understanding key elements of what was happening in Guatemala. US foreign policy did not accurately address the situation in Guatemala. This difficulty in understanding what was happening is best explained by the complicated nature of the counter-terror program and Guatemalan society as a whole.

The rightist non-governmental terrorists and government-sponsored counter-terrorism began to have a serious impact on Guatemala by 1967. Who these groups were, how they operated, and developed deserves a more complete examination. The organization known as Mano Blanco generally receives a great deal of attention as the most well-known rightist terror group. Yet a closer examination of events reveals that this emphasis is misplaced, at least during the 1960’s. Mano Blanco originally developed as a terrorist group to oppose the Mendez Montenegro regime; it branched out into further terrorizing the population as a whole and in particular those elements of society

²¹³ NSA 00339, Memorandum from Walt Rostow to President Johnson, July/11/1967.

who were perceived as leftist or communist. Their actions against members of the PR worried the Mendez Montenegro administration and posed a serious threat to the stability of the party in control of the government, but their role in the violence of the 1960's should not be overemphasized.²¹⁴ Mano was very good at propaganda and was very successful in convincing many segments of the population that a great deal of terrorist actions against the left were being perpetrated by Mano. While this organization would continue to have a role in the future of the Guatemalan conflict, it is important to note that they were not as powerful as they first appear. Military counter-terror groups in an effort to spread fear and disguise those involved, created several fictitious groups upon which acts of violence were blamed. Groups like the NAO (New Anti Communist organization), MAG (Guatemalan Anti Communist Movement), and RAYO (The Thunderbolt) were cover names for clandestine army commando units, which served as execution squads. Mano was often lumped in with these groups and received credit for their actions. Ambassador Mein referred to these anti-communist organizations as alphabet soup organizations, implying that they were a successful obfuscation of who was behind the terrorism.²¹⁵ This did not last long and it soon became clear to the US embassy and the Guatemalan public that the military was behind the new terrorism. "It appears only MANO ever really existed as an independent organization free of army

²¹⁴ Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: rebels, death squads, and US power* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1991), P.62-64, presents the opinion that Mano was a part of the military counter-terror apparatus, another misconception that has influenced the emphasis on Mano in previous assessments.

²¹⁵ NSA 00333, Telegram from Guatemalan Embassy to State Department, "Right Wing Terrorism: Memorandum of Conversation," May/17/1967.

control. The other organizations are apparently only cover for clandestine army commando units which serve as armed forces execution squads.”²¹⁶

The Guatemalan military was given *carte blanche* to act against the leftist guerillas after Mendez Montenegro’s peace offer was declined. This resulted in two new strategies to combat the guerillas. Campesinos began to be armed, and the Special Commando Unit of the Guatemalan Army (SCUGA) began carrying out kidnappings, torture, and executions in the guise of civilian terrorist groups.²¹⁷ The most dramatic of these two strategies was clearly the actions of SCUGA. The complete illegality and brutality of this army organization’s assault on the citizens of Guatemala was shocking. Under the command of Colonel Maximo Zepeda, this unit, at times working with the fourth corps of the national police, took action against communists real and alleged as well as “enemies of the state.” This unit operated in more urban areas whereas the armed campesinos in the Zacapa and Izabal region were under the command of Colonel Arana Osorio. Known as “Operation Guatemala” this part of the counter-terror operation was less centralized but still employed the same brutal tactics on a more diffuse scale throughout the countryside. In particular, this rural campaign was successful in eroding the local leadership throughout the countryside.²¹⁸ Death counts vary significantly yet it

²¹⁶ NSA 332, State Department INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) Thomas L Huges, “Vigilantism Poses Threat to Stability,” May/12/1967.

²¹⁷ State Department INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) Thomas L Huges, “Counter-Insurgency Running Wild,” October/23/1967, Guatemala country file, NSF, box 54, folder 3, LBJ Library; NSA 00349, CIA report, “SCUGA Developing Intelligence Gathering,” November/1967.

²¹⁸ NSA 00338, Memorandum from A. Hernandez of the Rural Development Department to the Director, “The Creeping Coup,” July/3/1967, discusses a Alcalde (mayor) being forced to resign.

is clear that the Guatemalan government during the Mendez Montenegro administration was responsible for the deaths of close to 1,000 of its citizens, possibly more.²¹⁹

The details of the Guatemalan counter-terror campaign are unclear at best, just as the details of the guerilla operations are clouded by the unreliability of sources and the nature of these secretive organizations. It is impossible to make any concrete claims about these groups based solely upon the information that US officials had. Yet, the larger implication of the growing terror in Guatemala was that the administration of Mendez Montenegro was weakening. Numerous State Department communications were bringing up the question of whether Mendez Montenegro would be able to stop the counter terror when necessary and how much longer the Guatemalan people would put up with the violence. US officials described what was happening in Guatemala as a “creeping coup.”²²⁰ The military was gaining more power, and the legitimate government was giving up its control gradually to satisfy the demands of the conservative elites. A rather telling remark was made to William Newlin, a political officer, in an interview with several prominent Guatemalans; Newlin commented that the anti-communist forces had not eliminated any of the well known PGT big shots. The reply was “one of the keys to all of Guatemalan politics. The big shots are ‘your neighbors and ours in zone 10’ big – really big – lawyers, etc., and at least someone’s

²¹⁹ Patrick Ball, Paul Kobrak and Herbert Spierer, *Violencia Institucional en Guatemala, 1960 a 1996: Una Reflexion Cuantitativa* (New York, 1999), asses the number of state murders at right around 1,000; State Department INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) Thomas L Huges, “Counter-Insurgency Running Wild,” October/23/1967, Guatemala country file, NSF, box 54, folder 3, LBJ Library, estimated the possibility of close to a thousand deaths up to 1967.

²²⁰ NSA 00338, Memorandum from A. Hernandez of the Rural Development Department to the Director, “The Creeping Coup,” July/3/1967, A. Hernandez used this term as a subject heading and it will continue to appear in State Department communications. This term will also be used to describe similar situations in other areas of the world.

son-in-law. Who, they asked smiling, would dare touch them?"²²¹ The implication is that in Guatemala politics was so intertwined with elite factions and other ties as to be indistinguishable. It is important to remember that this was not a straightforward political struggle; it was an internal clashing of forces trying to grab for more power. Thus, the pressure against Mendez Montenegro to continue allowing the military free reign clashed with cautious recommendations from the US embassy to curb the counter-terror forces. He remained trapped between the two factions and was unable to work towards any lessening of tensions.²²²

On January 16th 1968, two US military personnel in Guatemala were assassinated, Colonel John Webber Jr., the commander of the US Guatemala Military Group, and Lt. commander Ernest Monroe. Their car was hit with machine gun fire from several members of FAR. "The communists have now 'broken the ice' on assassinations of US personnel in Latin America"²²³ The ice was indeed broken; on August 28th Ambassador Mein was assassinated. While driving north on the Avenida Reforma, the ambassador's car was cut off in front by a green Chevelle and boxed in from the rear by a red Toyota. Three men forced the ambassador and his chauffeur from their car and tried to drag off the ambassador. He broke loose, tried to run, and was gunned down.

²²¹NSA 00333, Telegram from Guatemalan Embassy to State Department, "Right Wing Terrorism: Memorandum of Conversation," May/17/1967.

²²² NSA 00342, Memorandum for Ambassador and Director from A. Hernandez Rural Development Advisor, "Conversation With the Alcalde of Zacapa After Meeting With President Mendez," August/11/1967, the Alcalde's conversation with the President shows Mendez Montenegro trying to reduce aspects of the counter-terror.

²²³ State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United State, 1964-1968 South and Central America; Mexico*, ed. Edward C. Keefer, David C. Geyer and David H. Herschler, Vol. XXXI, information memorandum from acting assistant Secretary of State for inter-American Affairs (Sayre) to Secretary of State Rusk, January/17/1968, P.226.

The FAR claimed responsibility for the assassination, stating that it was in reprisal for the illegal imprisonment of Carlos Francisco Ordonez Monteguado.²²⁴ This assassination influenced the US to perceive the guerilla problem as a more serious threat to Guatemalan stability, and significantly shook the confidence of diplomatic officials in their own personal safety. Yet the real importance of these two assassinations is that they represent a last gasp of the Guatemalan extreme left against the overwhelming force of the government counter terror program.

By 1968, US military intelligence estimated that MR-13 had no more than 20 active members and that FAR had been reduced to 125 fulltime activists with several hundred supporters.²²⁵ While neither of these guerilla groups had been completely defeated, their support networks and ability to successfully carry out large-scale coordinated operations had been effectively neutralized. The assassination of US personnel was part of an increased emphasis on urban insurgency by the guerillas because they had become so ineffective in rural areas.²²⁶ The government terror operations were successful in doing significant damage to these two organizations. MR-13 would disband after Yon Sosa was killed in Mexico in 1970. And FAR would lose the ability to mount any substantive action as the decade came to a close. Without political or popular support these guerilla groups could not continue fighting. The terror

²²⁴ NSA 00376, Flash Communication From Bromley Smith to the President, August/28/1968; NSA 00382, Memorandum For the Files by Peter F. Costello Chief Public Safety Officer, "Killing of US Ambassador," September/27/1968 the first communication marks the initial report of ambassador Mein being shot, there were a series of reports and theories working out the details of the event culminating in the memorandum on September 27th which was the most detailed and complete.

²²⁵ NSA 353, Defense Intelligence Agency, "Military Intelligence Summary Guatemala," January/1/1968; at their strongest FAR had close to 500 supporters and MR-13 around 150.

²²⁶ NSA 388, State Department INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) Thomas L Huges Report, "Guerillas Resolve to Attack American Presence," November/15/1968.

campaign successfully made it impossible for anyone to support the guerillas; if they did, they were killed, tortured, or imprisoned. With a deterrent like that it was not surprising that the guerilla movements lost the support they needed to continue functioning. This victory was not complete or permanent but after 1968, leftist guerilla action and government counter-terror declined.

For most of his presidency Mendez Montenegro was not in firm control of what the military was doing. But in March of 1968, he dismissed the Minister of Defense Arriaga Bosque, the head of Zacapa operations Arana Osorio, and the commander of the honor guard.²²⁷ This marks one of the only times in Guatemalan history where the military was challenged by civilian authority. The removal of these officers was motivated by the desire to curb the violence being produced by the counter-terror operations. That Arana Osorio was removed and Mendez Montenegro ordered the civilian militias in the Zacapa, Izabal regions to be disarmed points towards this fact.²²⁸ While Mendez Montenegro managed to avoid any serious backlash from the military, he was still in a position where he had to keep the conservative elements happy, and was not able to work toward any significant reforms. Despite the serious doubts of most observers, Mendez Montenegro remained president for his entire term. His successor, however, was Colonel Arana Osorio, himself who would be the first of a series of presidents from the military. Yet Mendez Montenegro still left the legacy of having for a

²²⁷ NSA 00365, Memorandum for Walt Rostow, "Guatemalan Situation," March/28/1968.

²²⁸ NSA 00383, State Department INR Report (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) Thomas L Huges, "Disarming Right-Wing Vigilantes," October/21/1968; NSA 00371, CIA Intelligence Memorandum, "Guatemala After Military Shake Up," May/13/1968.

short while calmed the violence in Guatemala and asserted, however briefly, civilian authority over the military.

President Johnson in a cabinet meeting following his return from a weekend trip to Central America said “I would say there is no problem in Central America that money and resources cannot cure. But the problems are many, and they are great. There is a great deal to do in education, in health, in housing, in transportation, and communication. When all these problems are solved we can expect to see a better life for all the people of this hemisphere, and we can expect to see greatly expanded trade between our country and all of these nations.”²²⁹ This quote illustrates that on the uppermost level of US politics, the status quo had been maintained. John F. Kennedy could have just as easily made this statement; the primary goal of helping Central America economically and politically remained consistent under the Johnson administration. That help was tempered by the desire to increase trade and fight the spread of communism, just as it was under Kennedy. Johnson’s focus continued to center on the economic arena; later that year in NSAM (national security action memorandum) #371; he stated “At my recent meeting with the Presidents of Central America we agreed on the critical importance of accelerating growth and diversification of exports from Central American countries to both US and third country markets.”²³⁰

While on the surface, US policy was clear, the case of Guatemala was made more

²²⁹ State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United State, 1964-1968 South and Central America; Mexico*, ed. Edward C. Keefer, David C. Geyer and David H. Herschler, Vol. XXXI, minutes of cabinet meeting, July/10/1968, P.264.

²³⁰ Ibid, National Security Action Memorandum #371, p. 282.

complicated by the continuing difficulties in the country. This created differing strategies within lower levels of the US foreign policy apparatus, yet both Kennedy and Johnson focused on trying to create a more stable nation of Guatemala, without demonstrating an understanding of the nations fundamental problems.

While the presidents' position on US policy towards Central America was clear, there remained considerable disagreement between various lower-level policy makers. At the 37th senior interdepartmental group meeting on May 16, 1968, the various assessments of the Guatemalan situation were discussed as well as recommendations for action. Ambassador Mein summarized the analysis and proposal of the country team, which saw Mendez Montenegro as the most preferable option in Guatemala and wanted to continue with the current strategy, as it was ensuring he remained in power and not threatening his position. Assistant Secretary Covey T. Oliver reported that the IRG/ARA (interdepartmental regional group /Bureau of inter-American affairs) had determined that it was necessary to offer increased assistance and pressure Mendez Montenegro to make a serious attempt at reform.²³¹ The emphasis on pressuring Mendez Montenegro towards reform originated in the fact "that there had recently been considerable criticism in the United States press concerning repressive measures by the Guatemalan government and our apparent association with them."²³² Furthermore, Mendez Montenegro's action in removing the military leaders convinced this meeting that he had the capacity to work towards reform. These differences in policy stem from

²³¹ State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United State, 1964-1968 South and Central America; Mexico*, ed. Edward C. Keefer, David C. Geyer and David H. Herschler, Vol. XXXI, summary of the discussion and decisions at the 37th senior interdepartmental group meeting, May/16/1968, P.254-260.

²³² *Ibid*, P.256.

how the situation was understood. Some US officials like Viron Vaky saw how complicated the issues were. “The point is that the society is being rent apart and polarized; emotions, desire for revenge and personal bitterness are being sucked in; the pure communist issue is thus blurred; and issues of poverty and social injustice are being converted into virulent questions of outraged emotion and ‘tyranny.’ The whole cumulative impact is mostly unhealthy.”²³³ Others like Ambassador Mein simplified things and focused on the issues they understood. “The insurgency situation has been one of our great concerns in Guatemala, and many of our actions and programs have been directed specifically at getting the government to move and then in supporting it once it began its counter-insurgency actions.”²³⁴ Despite these differences in perspective the decision of the senior interdepartmental group meeting would be enacted; Mendez Montenegro was pressured to work towards reforms. While being given \$70 million dollars in US loans in 1969. And the United States would continue along this course trying to nudge Guatemala towards a viable future through economic assistance, but

²³³ State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United State, 1964-1968 South and Central America; Mexico*, ed. Edward C. Keefer, David C. Geyer and David H. Herschler, Vol. XXXI, Memorandum from Viron P. Vaky of the policy planning council to assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, March/29/1968, P.238.

²³⁴ Ibid, letter from the ambassador of Guatemala to assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, February/27/1968, P.229. It must be pointed out that, Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone: the United States Wages Cold War in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), describes a statement by Ambassador Mein in this letter, he said “Ambassador Mein had suggested that when the Guatemalan forces carried out summary executions they bury the bodies” this is a missquote, the original statement was in a section of the letter describing the infesability of the US affecting any change on Guatemalan policy, but making the point that some suggestions had been made, like stricter control on counter-terror forces and “if the security forces feel it necessary to carry out summary excutions in certain cases that they bury the bodies.” Rabes point that Ambassador Mein thought the counter-terror operations were more important than the overwhelmingly harmful impact of these actions is accurate, and consistent with what has been described above.

refusing to understand the deep divisions in Guatemalan society that were stopping any possibility of development.

In 1966 in response to the election of a politically center left president the Guatemalan right and political elite became more radicalized and resorted to terrorism, while at the same time the extreme left and revolutionary guerillas began to increase their own terrorist operations in response to the new wave of violence from the right. The precarious political position of Mendez Montenegro forced him to give the military carte blanche to act against the guerillas and terrorists. From 1966 to 1968, the democratically elected president of Guatemala allowed counter-terrorist forces led by elements of the government's military to terrorize the population. The tide of violence was stemmed when President Mendez Montenegro once again asserted control over the military, but a successful precedent of utilizing violent government-sponsored terrorism to control an insurgency had been established. Despite the further disintegration of law and order in Guatemala, US foreign policy leaders continued to see the Mendez Montenegro administration in a positive light, and tried to work towards the established goal of regional stability and economic improvement. While a guerilla insurgency was defeated, the deep divisions in Guatemalan society remained.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

US Cold War foreign policy had a powerful impact on the nation of Guatemala. From the 1954 coup sponsored by the CIA onwards, the fate of these two nations was intertwined. During the Kennedy administration the Alliance for Progress was created, and he also implemented military assistance programs in order to train Latin American nations to fight off the threat of communism, both of which were inspired by the successful Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro that transformed a friendly neighbor into the monster that was Communist expansion. Through a perspective heavily influenced by the Cuban revolution, the US saw the MR-13 rebellion and other incidents of Guatemalan domestic unrest as part of the larger struggle between capitalism and communism that was the Cold War. In response to the instability within Guatemala, the US focused on providing significant economic aid, while simultaneously working with the Guatemalan police and military to create more effective internal security forces capable of combating Communist subversion. Despite US attempts to foster stability, in 1963 President Ydigoras was removed from office by a military coup.

Defense Minister Enrique Peralta Azurdia took control of Guatemala following the coup, and the Kennedy administration quickly recognized the new government. The US understanding of the situation was that despite the lack of constitutionality behind Peralta's government, it was fighting communism and it was willing to work with the US. The Johnson administration continued to support the Guatemalan government and

continued to provide economic and military assistance. The economic assistance included loans, funding for various progressive social programs, and infrastructure improvement. The military assistance continued to focus on creating more efficient police, and a better intelligence network. Despite US assistance, the internal social and political divisions in Guatemala resulted in increased violence. In the midst of the escalating violence, elections were held in 1966 and Mendez Montenegro of the moderate left Partido Revolucionario was elected president and was allowed to take office by the military.

The election of a politically left president further radicalized the Guatemalan right, resulting in attempted coups and terrorism. The violence from the leftist guerillas and the right forced Mendez Montenegro to allow the military to use whatever means necessary to bring the country under control. As a result government-sponsored counter-terrorism units began to murder, kidnap, and torture suspected communists or threats to the government. This violence resulted in close to 1,000 deaths and the further collapse of order within Guatemala. In 1968, President Mendez removed several military officers from their posts and reasserted civilian control over the government. Throughout this period of chaos, US policy continued to support the Guatemalan government. While analysts were aware of the violence and disorder within Guatemala, policy makers continued to see the US role as aiding the government to build its economy and combat communism. US policy towards Guatemala was extremely optimistic, emphasizing the success of the Mendez government against the guerillas and the possibility for reform. While the US consistently tried to help Guatemala build a better future, its policy

ignored the biggest problem facing the nation. The Alliance for Progress tried to address economic issues, and social reform, but those in power in Guatemala rejected reform.

What you should take away from this was the depth and complexity of events in Guatemala. Nothing about Guatemala during this period was simple; the emphasis on the study of the Guatemalan Civil war needs to shift away from trying to understand it as a 40 year period. The previous attempts at historical analyses fail to take into account the details of how the situation developed. In the rush to explain the horrors of the genocide in the 1980's, it is easy to forget to explain how things got so bad. The growth of violence from the left and right did not happen overnight. There are also clear distinctions between the violence of the 1960's and 1980's. During the 1960's leftist guerillas were operating in eastern Guatemala without popular support. While in the 1980's there was significant indigenous involvement and the conflict was focused on north-western Guatemala. Also military control of the country developed slowly, Ydigoras government was clearly distinct from the military, yet following the Peralta coup the military gradually increased their control over the country. But this process was not uniform, as Mendez Montenegro's reigning in of the counter-terror illustrates. These major developments were driven by internal political struggles and illuminate the distinctions that separate the 1960's from the larger struggles of the Cold War, which framed these events.

The US consistently viewed Guatemala through the lens of the Cold War, unable to understand the complex motivations involved in the Guatemalan situation. Despite a series of events ranging from a military coup, rural guerilla insurgency, elections, and

counter-terror operation, the foreign policy of the United States focused consistently on creating greater stability, improving economic conditions, and combating the spread of communism. Despite the need for a policy tailored to the specific challenges that were present in Guatemala, US aid did not evolve. Even under multiple US administrations, that policy remained consistent with only a few minor alterations, between Johnson and Kennedy. This static policy is more representative of US policy in Latin America than the many examples provided by “more important countries.” While US policy did not change, the situation in Guatemala would continue to evolve.

Mendez Montenegro did finish his term in office, but the following presidents were all military men the extreme right. In the 1970's, the guerilla insurgency and conversely the counter-insurgency would wax and wane. But by the early 1980's, a terror program against the indigenous Maya population reached new levels of violence. While these events were not direct reactions to what happened in the 1960's the relationship is clear. The successful application of counter-terror as a tool to quell guerilla forces also inspired a future generation of military leaders to employ it, for their own ends. There were however some positive legacies of the 1960's. The administration of Mendez Montenegro illustrated that a civilian leader could lead the country, and in 1985 a civilian leader would once again hold the office of president. While this period of US-Guatemalan relations represents no major victories for the US, it does illustrate that the role of the US in training Guatemalan forces has been greatly exaggerated. The reality was that US training was more focused on the mundane issues of maintenance and organization rather than counter-terror and torture.

The start of Guatemala's problems, the 1954 coup, was clearly the result of Cold War tensions, yet the troubles continued because of internal divisions. While from America's perspective the Cold War was the most important issue for its foreign policy to address, in Guatemala national politics used Cold War ideology and rhetoric for their own ends. This study presents an example of the complicated interplay between US foreign policy and national political developments. The United States' failed attempts to stabilize and improve conditions in Guatemala further illuminates the issues which have made the story of modern Guatemala one of the saddest in a region full of sad stories.

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Program or account	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	_2009D0
Narcotics Control	24.30
International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement	11.31
Andean Counterdrug Initiative, Department of State	12.99
Other State Assistance	0.58
Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs, Department of State	0.07
National Endowment for Democracy, Department of State	0.51
Other Economic Assistance, Total	0.70	.	4.30	9.00	0.50	4.80	4.00	0.70	3.40	0.80	21.09
Peace Corps	.	.	0.00	1.20	0.50	0.60	0.40	0.70	0.70	0.60	4.41
Peace Corps	.	.	0.00	1.20	0.50	0.60	0.40	0.70	0.70	0.60	4.41
Department of Defense Security Assistance	2.48
Drug Interdiction and Counter-Drug Activities, Defense	2.48
Other Active Grant Programs	14.21
Trade and Development Agency	0.51
International Affairs Technical Assistance, Department of Treasury	1.39
Inter-American Foundation	0.03
Multinational Species Conservation Fund, United States Fish and Wildlife Service	0.07
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation, United States Fish and Wildlife Service	0.03
Salaries and Expenses, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives	0.59
Salaries and Expenses, Departmental Management, Department of Labor	4.20
Disease Control, Research, and Training, Centers for Disease Control	7.33
Salaries and Expenses, Food and Drug Administration	0.01
Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation, Department of Energy	0.06
Inactive Programs	0.70	.	4.30	7.80	.	4.20	3.60	0.00	2.70	0.20	.
Social Progress Trust Fund (Loans)	.	.	3.50	7.80	.	3.00

APPENDIX B

Monthly Guerilla Report- November
From US Guatemalan Embassy

NSA 00326, Guatemalan embassy telegram, "monthly guerilla report November," December/17/1966. The following is a list of terrorist incidents that happened during the month of November. This list helps better understand the severity and constant nature of violence in Guatemala during this period.

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retrospect to have never had much of a chance because key elements of the military remained loyal to the GOG. The coup plan was a well kept secret, however, and but for a last minute tip-off would have been implemented. The fact that the Army for the most part remained loyal, is an encouraging point and hopefully will discourage other Rightist plotters.

18. At the beginning of the month the MLN was extremely vocal in its criticism of the Government, calling it soft on communism since the bulk of the actions under the state of siege were, or appeared to be, directed at the Right, not the Communists. This was understandable, since the Rightist leaders are for the most part better known and easier to pick up. By the end of the month, however, it was clear, probably even to the Rightist leaders themselves, that the preponderance of the Government's efforts was directed against the guerrillas.

19. The fact that the MLN quieted down during the month does not suggest it can be forgotten, however. Although the possibility of a coup in the near future seems most remote, there are reports that Mario Sandoval made a successful fund-raising, drum beating swing through El Salvador and that he returned to Guatemala with his revolutionary zeal undaunted. The current period of quiescence, therefore, can best be read as a period of regrouping by the Right, rather than withdrawal from the field.

20. List of Terrorist Incidents in November

Nov 2 Bomb explodes at Guatemala City (hereinafter, "G.C.") home of James McSweeney, U.S. Citizen (WEEKA 44).

FAR sets fire to Amatitlan fuel storage tanks owned by American and Foreign Power Company subsidiary, Empresa Electrica de Guatemala (GUATEMALA 2251).

Nov 3 Bomb causes some damage to G.C. school (WEEKA 44).

Nov 5 Two bombs do minor damage to home and motor cycle agency in G.C. (WEEKA 45).

Bomb does little damage to IRCA (railroad) oil tanks (WEEKA 45)

Brief encounter between Army patrol and guerrilla encampment near Los Achiotos, Zacapa, results in no

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captures, no fatalities; several guerrillas presumed wounded; encampment destroyed (WEEKA 45).

Man injured by explosion of hand grenade in car and subsequently arrested when police learn car had been used in provincial police station raid (WEEKA 45).

Army units engaged guerrillas near Rabinal, Baja Verapaz. Nine or ten guerrillas reported captured.

Nov 6 Unexploded U.S.-made mortar shell found on steps of G.C. church (WEEKA 45).

Small bomb explodes harmlessly at Argentine Embassy (WEEKA 45).

PR headquarters sprayed by burst of machinegun fire from passing car.

Unknown assailants direct small arms fire on Cuilapa, capital of Santa Rosa, without causing notable damage (WEEKA 45).

Nov 7 MR-13 group ambushes five Army armored cars in Atlantic area, kills lead driver (WEEKA 45).

Nov 8 Aviateca Airlines' high octane gasoline storage tanks (Texaco) fail to ignite when bomb thrown from passing car explodes near them (WEEKA 45)

G.C. firemen report anonymous threats for prompt action in Amatitlan fire (Nov. 2 above); FAR denies role (WEEKA 45).

Nov 10 Saboteurs disrupt telegraph service in Quezaltenango (WEEKA 45).

Nov 11 Zacapa bus nearly destroyed by bomb (WEEKA 46).

Nov 12 Secretary General of PR in Chiquimula dies of gunshot wounds; PR accuses MLN (WEEKA 46).

Woman dies in exchange of gunfire between Army patrol and guerrillas in Zacapa (WEEKA 46).

Unknown arsonists fail to put Malacatan bridge out of commission (WEEKA 46).

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\$5,000 stolen from National Tobacco Co. armored truck on Atlantic Highway by MR-13 band presumed to include Yon Sosa (WEEKA 46).

Nov 14 Presumed guerrillas armed with submachineguns steal \$30,000 from Banco del Occidente in G.C. and flee scene crying "Long live Montes" (new FAR chieftain). (WEEKA 46)

Arms stolen from G.C. courtroom by four men who paint MR-13 slogans on wall before fleeing (WEEKA 46).

Nov 15 Local businessman kidnapped; held for ransom. Was released Nov. 19 on payment of a reported Q25,000 (Q1=\$1). MR-13 first suspected but common criminals actually responsible. (WEEKA 47).

Nov 17 Armed assault on police station in Baja Verapaz; no casualties (WEEKA 47).

Nov 18 Home of El Quiche military zone commander bombed (WEEKA 47).

Nov 19 Policeman killed while guarding home of member of Presidential Secretariat (GUATEMALA 2574).

Policeman killed in sentry box on road between G.C. and San Pedro Sacatepequez (WEEKA 47; GUATEMALA 2574).

Nov 20 Leftist radio station, Guatemala Flash, bombed (WEEKA 47; GUATEMALA 2574).

El Imparcial photographer kidnapped, questioned and beaten by Rightists (GUATEMALA 2574 and 2628).

Nov 22 Bomb tossed in front of Bank of Guatemala (WEEKA 47).

Cache of chlorate used in bomb-making uncovered (GUATEMALA 2628).

Nov 23 Five policemen killed in three separate incidents in G.C.; one terrorist killed and three captured at home of AEU President Vinicio Gonzales (GUATEMALA 2628).

Tax agent killed in Santa Rosa Department (WEEKA 47).

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- Nov 24 Small-time G.C. publisher shot and killed by two men on passing motorcycle.
- Police check point between G.C. and Antigua strafed by passing car (WEEKA 47).
- AEU President, Vinicio Gonzalez arrested.
- Probable Mano Blanca (extreme right) assassin of Zacapa PR leader (Nov 12 above) captured (WEEKA 47).
- Nov 25 FAR seizes radio station 18 kms. from capital. Broadcasts anti-U.S. tape (GUATEMALA 2696).
- Police capture two bomb-throwers who have just blown up parked car (WEEKA 48).
- Nov 26 Grenade explodes harmlessly on grounds of U.S. Consulate (GUATEMALA 2696).
- Two staff members of extreme leftist university publication El Estudiante arrested for involvement in gunfight (WEEKA 48).
- Terrorists raid Treasury Police office near Malacatan, San Marcos, escape with booty of arms (WEEKA 48).
- Gunfire turned on several private homes in Zone 5 of capital (WEEKA 48).
- FAR recruiter, allegedly offering \$5 per day to prospective guerrillas, arrested (GUATEMALA 2696).
- Two FAR adherents killed (including Montes' lieutenant "Chino" Arnoldo) near Panalulla, Zacapa, and most of arms captured from military patrol last May recovered.
- Nov 27 Troops from Puerto Barrios ambush semi-permanent MR-13 headquarters near Los Amates, Izabal; two killed and several, including Yon Sosa reported wounded (GUATEMALA 2758).
- Two more guerrillas killed in separate confrontation.
- Three children injured by exploding bomb in G.C.
- Bridge near Malacatan partially destroyed by dynamite ostensibly planted by FAR (WEEKA 48).

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- Nov 27 Home of Chiquimula acting PR leader bombed from truck with banner reading "The Mano Blanca (Extreme Right) is with you." (WEEKA 48)
- Three two-month old shot-up cadavers found in Rio Hondo area, two near Chiquimula.
- Two mobile military policemen killed in ambush (WEEKA 48).
- Nov 28 Campesinos help Army uncover major FAR cache in Zacapa, including M-16 rifle and Turcios' diary.
- Home of Pedro Julio Garcia, co-owner and editor of Prensa Libre, bombed (GUATEMALA 2758).
- Bomb explodes harmlessly in Totonicapan (WEEKA 48).
- Nov 29 Freight train machine-gunned near Rio Hondo and brakeman seriously wounded (WEEKA 48).
- Six unidentified bodies found near Rio Hondo, two in Jalapa Department.
- Nov 30 Two mobile military policemen machine-gunned to death in Escuintla (WEEKA 48).
- Former Judicial police agent shot to death by unidentified assailants in G.C. street (GUATEMALA 2778).
- Three city installations, including police sentry box, fired on; no casualties (GUATEMALA 2842).
- Chimaltenango clinic director threatened in name of FAR with death if medical services did not improve (WEEKA 48).
- Two bodies found in Izabal Department, one with note attached saying victim betrayed FAR.

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