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## THESIS

THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS CARIBBEAN ALLIES:  
STRATEGIC, MARITIME, AND REGIONAL THREAT  
TO THE UNITED STATES

by

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March 1985

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This thesis briefly examines the historical context of Soviet involvement in the region, and then proceeds to catalog the above mentioned threats to U.S. security, and discusses their implications.



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The Soviet Union and Its Caribbean Allies: Strategic,  
Maritime, and Regional Threat to the United States

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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March 1985

## ABSTRACT

The Soviet Union's activity in the Caribbean Basin, executed via its client-states of Cuba and Nicaragua, has created a serious threat to U.S. security in the region. This threat to U.S. security takes two forms. The first is the reality of a heavily militarized Cuba posing a significant anti-SLOC potential against Caribbean sea lanes in the event of general war. Such a scenario would tie down NATO antisubmarine warfare (ASW) assets in the Caribbean, detracting from NATO's ability to wage the ASW campaign in more critical areas such as the Central and North Atlantic. The second threat is Nicaraguan and Cuban active support of leftist insurgencies in the Basin. These efforts, at the direction of the Soviet Union, pose, not a potential, but a present-day and ongoing security concern for the United States.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The increased Soviet presence in Central America, either directly or through client-states, places in jeopardy what has been viewed as one of the United States' longest standing vital interests: prevention of any hostile power from establishing a military foothold in this hemisphere. Past administrations, as well as the present one, have chosen to accept Cuba and her prodigious military capability as an incontestable fait accompli. Soviet military presence, including regular visits to Cuba by frontline Soviet naval and air assets, has been an accepted fact for many years. What the present administration appears resolved to prevent is the extension of that military foothold to other parts of the Caribbean Basin. Cole Blasier's conclusion, that the region is "most distant and strategically least important to the Soviets," vastly underestimates the Soviet leadership's capacity to recognize the potential for hopelessly entangling the United States in a series of no-win political and/or military situations; perhaps more importantly, the region could present a serious military threat to the United States in the event of a general war.

If the Sandinista Revolution of 1979 was a turning point for Soviet aspirations in the region, the U.S. invasion of the Leninist island-nation of Grenada (sinking under the weight of a monstrous collection of conventional weapons from the Soviet Union) was a turning point for the United States,

and its policy for the Caribbean. The Reagan administration chose a totally appropriate response to the security threat presented in the area by the Leninist murderers of Maurice Bishop--military force.

In a joint operation with Caribbean Forces, a lightning-like, and extremely effective operation, was conducted in October 1983, which removed this repressive Leninist regime from power. U.S. military forces demonstrated two basic political realities to the world. First, when used with commitment and determination, military force is a remarkably effective extension of foreign policy. Secondly, the U.S. was not about to abandon the Caribbean Basin as its rightful sphere of influence, even at the risk of alienating U.S. domestic and world opinion by the utilization of armed force.

In this region, the gravest threat to U.S. security, both in peacetime and in a general war situation, is the presence of a militarized Cuba. As the second-most militarily powerful country in the Caribbean, this Soviet client-state presents grave and complex security problems for the United States. The ability of Soviet naval and air assets to operate at will from Cuban facilities makes the Cuban threat that much more considerable. In peacetime, the Soviets have a base from which to operate intelligence collection platforms, in the form of: strategic reconnaissance aircraft (Bear-D), nuclear attack submarines (SSN), and intelligence collection ships (AGI). In time of war, all of these assets

would already be in place to begin operations against U.S. forces, and maritime shipping in the Caribbean. In the case of SSN's and SSGN's, the mission would go beyond reconnaissance, and quickly shift to that of anti-shipping operations. The tremendous potential danger to the United States in this present-day state of affairs, is best described in the Report of the President's National Bipartisan Commission on Central America:

The Soviets have already achieved a greater capability to interdict shipping than the Nazis had during World War II, when 50 percent of U.S. supplies to Europe were shipped from Gulf ports. German U-boats then sank 260 merchant ships in just six months, despite the fact that allied forces enjoyed many advantages, including a two-to-one edge in submarines, and the use of Cuba for resupply and basing operations. Today this is reversed. [Underline mine.] The Soviets now have a two-to-one edge overall in submarines, and can operate and receive aircover from Cuba, a point from which all 13 Caribbean sealanes passing through four chokepoints are vulnerable to interdiction.... The Soviets ability to carry out a strategy of "strategic denial" is further enhanced by the presence near Havana of the largest Soviet-managed electronic monitoring complex outside the Soviet Union. [Ref. 1]

The second major threat to U.S. security interests is the Soviet client-state of Nicaragua. Here, the threat is not only actual, but more importantly, is a threat of tremendously increased potential. The Sandinista regime is the co-conspirator (with Cuba) in providing support for leftist insurgents in El Salvador, and elsewhere in the region. Additionally, Nicaragua provides the Soviet Union with all of the requisites for becoming a second Cuba, i.e. a Soviet military/ideological partner in the Caribbean Basin



which, besides fueling leftist insurgencies in the region, can provide a replenishment haven for Soviet naval and air assets.

Composed solely of Soviet equipment, the Nicaraguan military is grossly over-sized for the security needs of a country of its size. As a result, it poses a threat to peaceful neighbors, and fuels a Central American arms race which serves the interests of no one in this hemisphere. The Sandinista's explanation for their over-sized military machine is that it is a defense against any future U.S. military incursion into that country. Unfortunately, the Sandinista's are hard-pressed to find any objective observer willing to acquiesce to the notion that the Nicaraguans could defend themselves against a U.S. military onslaught, even if the Nicaraguan military establishment were twice its present size. Therefore, the Sandinista's military might serves no real purpose other than to threaten its nonhostile Central American neighbors.

A large-scale U.S. military solution to Nicaragua and its threatening war machine is unattractive for a number of reasons. A solution utilizing U.S. military intervention would, in all likelihood, be a costly affair if U.S. ground forces were employed in numbers. The Sandinistas are aware of this, as are the Soviets. What would be far less costly, would be the employment of either land-based, or carrier-based, U.S. tactical airstrikes, to remove large segments of the Nicaraguan military capability. This is a fact which is not lost upon the Soviets and their Nicaraguan colleagues, and one

which probably has been a primary motivation in not providing Soviet tactical aircraft to the Sandinistas as the Soviets had promised earlier. The Reagan administration has repeated that if Soviet tactical jet aircraft were to be sent to Nicaragua, a U.S. "response" would soon follow. The form that response would take has been sufficiently vague to prevent delivery, thus far.

This work will attempt to describe the present and potential threat posed to U.S. security interests by a grossly over-militarized Cuba, and a Nicaraguan area, rapidly following suit--with both countries supporting and fomenting insurgency in Central America, and offering the capability of providing basing facilities for the U.S.S.R.'s naval and air assets.

## II. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SOVIET RELATIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND CUBA

### A. GENERAL REVIEW

Although the history of the Soviet Union's involvement in Central America is not long, neither is it an overnight phenomenon. Let us now turn to that historical perspective.

The interest and influence of the Soviet Union in Central America began a little over 20 years ago. At the outset, the Bolshevik regime seemed like a natural ally to the anti-imperialist government of Mexico. Indeed, Mexico was one of the first countries to grant diplomatic recognition to the newly created Leninist government. However, geographical remoteness, and fear of U.S. hegemony in the region, restrained the Soviets for many years--even precluding establishment of diplomatic ties. (See Table I.) With the exception of Mexico, this general trend remained true until the 1960's.

Due to alleged subversive activities of local Communist Parties, even friendly Mexico broke diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. in 1930, followed by Uruguay in 1935. Throughout Latin America, this ostracism would linger for many years. After World War II, several governments, including those of Chile and Columbia, severed ties with the Soviets for the same reason as Mexico and Uruguay: alleged subversion [Ref. 2].

TABLE I

SOVIET DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA

	1917	1925	1930	1935	1940	1945	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980
Mexico	[-----]					[-----]							
Guatemala						*							
Costa Rica					*						[-----]		
Cuba					[-----]				[-----]				
Grenada												[--]	
Suriname													[--]
Venezuela						[---]					[-----]		
Columbia				*	[---]						[-----]		
Peru											[-----]		
Bolivia						*					[-----]		
Chile					[---]								
Argentina											[-----]		
Uruguay		*			[--]						[-----]		
Brazil						[--]					[-----]		

Source: Blasier, Cole, A Giant's Rival: The USSR and Latin America, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983.

\*Indicates recognition without exchange of representatives.



Although the Soviets claimed for years that their lack of success in establishing government-to-government ties with Latin American countries was due to U.S. interference, there is little evidence to support this claim. A stronger case could be made that, economically, the Soviets had relatively little if anything to offer those countries in contrast with private U.S. business interests, which offered much in the way of investment.

In 1960, the U.S.S.R. maintained diplomatic relations with only three countries in Latin America: Cuba, Brazil, and Argentina. After the success of the Cuban Revolution, this situation changed dramatically--not only with Latin America, but with Central America as well. By the mid-1970's, nearly all of the major South American and Central American Caribbean Basin countries had opened diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, usually accompanied by substantial diplomatic presences, and expanded commercial and cultural exchanges. Soviet trade with the region grew tenfold between 1970 and 1977 [Ref. 3].

Ideologically, primary attention was given to Asia and Africa in the post-Stalin reassessment of opportunities in the Third World. In the 1950's, Khurshchev's formulation of a "zone of peace" in the Third World did not include Latin America. There had been considerable debate among Soviet scholars in the 1960's and 1970's over the question of whether or not Latin America should even be included as the Third World. Such a "theoretical construct leads to a mechanical

transfer of the experience of national liberation wars, and revolutions of the Afro-Asian countries to Latin American conditions." [Ref. 4]

This debate among Soviet scholars has all but ceased. Latin America, and specifically Central America and the Caribbean, are now of primary importance to the Soviets. Today, a far more representative statement from the Soviet scholarly community would be Sergio Mikoyan's now famous comment upon Nicaragua's Sandinista revolution (in Latinskaia America in 1980), which declared that the revolution was an event of colossal international importance--one of those events that demands reexamination of established concepts. Much of the ambiguity found in Soviet writing about Central America in the 1960's and 1970's is no longer present, having been replaced by general optimism.

Previous Soviet perceptions and practical considerations were at the root of Moscow's earliest attitudes toward the southern areas of this hemisphere. The Soviet Union had lacked the resources and means of employment to support an active strategy in an area so remote from the reaches of the Bear. Moscow believed, and rightly so, that the United States considered Latin America to be under its guardianship, and therefore would not tolerate leftist regimes, or any substantial Soviet influence. Going back as far as the Spanish/American War of 1898, U.S. propensity for military intervention in the region was an historical data point not

lost on the Soviets. Had any doubts lingered in the minds of the Kremlin leadership, they surely were dispelled by the 1954 U.S. intervention against the Soviet-supported Arbenz regime in Guatemala, which resulted in the overthrow of that regime. Leftist defeats in the Dominican Republic in 1965, and in Chile in 1973, were additional causes for Soviet timidity.

This understandable pessimism was counterbalanced by the success of Fidel Castro in Cuba. Castro's victory, and his ability to defy the United States, was considered a clear sign of the end of U.S. dominance in the hemisphere. As a result, the tone of Soviet speeches changed markedly. In March 1966, at the 23d Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Brezhnev made mention of the courageous liberation struggle in Latin America, and stated that "today in every country in that continent, the people are waging a struggle against U.S. imperialism and its accomplices [and are being led by] the working class and the Communist Parties." [Ref. 5]

#### B. CUBA: THE GREAT BREAKTHROUGH

The increased scope of Soviet activities in the Caribbean and Central America dates from May 1960, when the U.S.S.R. formalized diplomatic relations with Cuba. Castro had succeeded in fulfilling a long-held Soviet dream, i.e., establishment of a revolutionary state in an area of perceived U.S.

preeminence. No one on either side of the iron curtain ever could have imagined the far-reaching impact of that relationship in the following two decades. As one Soviet writer put it:

The Cuban revolution was a shattering blow to the theory of "geographic fatalism" that for a long time had determined the policy of most of the Latin American countries. According to the theory, the territorial proximity of the Latin American states to the USA doomed them to permanent dependence, and to following in Washington's wake. Cuba's experience has demonstrated that a revolutionary people can shake off imperialism, and with the support of the socialist community, successfully withstand intervention, economic embargoes, achieve economic and political sovereignty, and pursue an independent foreign policy. [Ref. 6]

Cuba was a positive indication that the correlation of forces was shifting in the direction of Moscow. How else could a country so close to the United States, and so far from the U.S.S.R., utilize Soviet aid and support to become the bastion of leftist revolution for an entire hemisphere? Support for the above conclusion was the botched U.S. attempt to replace Castro with an external insertion of forces. The ease and efficacy of the 1954 intervention in Guatemala provided U.S. policymakers with a model of indirect, covert intervention that they attempted to duplicate against Castro in Cuba in 1961. The Castro regime demonstrated at the Bay of Pigs that it was much better prepared, and a more formidable adversary, than the Arbenz regime. As a result, a revolutionary, expansionist anti-U.S. regime survived, and consolidated its power [Ref. 7].



Cuba may be the most important single political acquisition of the Soviet Union in the last 30 years. Ironically, the Cuban Communists, and the U.S.S.R., had little or nothing to do with Fidel Castro's overthrow of the Batista regime in 1959.

The Soviet Union had maintained an influence in Cuba long before Castro rose to power through a group called the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP). They, and their Chilean counterparts, were the most politically powerful parties in Latin America during the 1930's, dominating their respective national labor movements, and maintaining respectable electoral followings until the late 1940's [Ref. 8]. Castro's "26th of July Movement" is often interpreted as having been orchestrated by Moscow, with the intent of using the Cuban Communists as the vehicle to oust Batista. Evidence suggests that Castro was using the PSP to his own end, strengthening his hold over all leftist forces, and as a future cushion in his relations with the Soviets.

Castro recruited and deployed his guerrillas with little attention to consulting with PSP leaders. Indeed, there was no party organization in the Castro command. On the other hand, the Communists, who kept their small political organization together, contributed little if anything to the fight against the Batista forces. PSP leader Blas Roca explained that the party correctly believed that mass actions can be transformed into an armed struggle, but that "we took no

practical measures to realize this possibility for a long time. [We thought this could happen spontaneously.] We didn't train, nor arm, our cadres...that was our mistake." [Ref. 9] The PSP remained critical of the "26th of July Movement" concerning both tactical and strategic decisions. By the time Batista fell, the PSP was in a very weak position compared to Castro's armed cadres.

The Soviets moved with little haste to solidify their position with Castro. The U.S.S.R. extended formal recognition in January 1959, but did not sign any agreements for the exchange of ambassadors until 16 months after Castro came to power. Castro's goal to seek aid from the Soviets became considerably easier to achieve by the immediate sanctions placed on Cuba by the Eisenhower Administration. In early 1960, sanctions imposed included the termination of U.S. sugar purchases and oil deliveries, and support for Cuban emigre insurgent groups in training in the United States [Ref. 10].

Khrushchev agreed to purchase Cuban sugar, and to provide military backing, (the latter of which proved to be instrumental in repulsing the Bay of Pigs invasion). The U.S. knee-jerk reaction to Fidel Castro's successes not only opened the door to a Soviet patronship of Cuba, but also, undoubtedly, accelerated that relationship. Although the Bay of Pigs was a total failure (costing Alan Dulles his position as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency), the U.S. administration would continue its covert efforts through Operation Mongoose--a CIA

directed operation consisting of paramilitary, sabotage, and political propaganda activities directed against Cuba between October 1961 and 1962 [Ref. 11].

The obvious threat from the United States, coupled with the bright hope of promising revolutionary opportunities in the region, led by the Cubans, made for a close relationship between Moscow and Havana. Both leaderships had fundamental common interests, i.e., survival of Castro's regime, and the future health of Cuban socialism. Even with these common interests and a mutual enemy, the honeymoon period between Cuba and the U.S.S.R. was short-lived.

From the very beginning (up to and including the present), Castro has sought some sort of firm guarantee from the Soviet leadership to defend Cuba in the event of an attack by the United States. This issue first arose in 1960 when Castro sought Soviet aid in response to U.S. sanctions. Khrushchev's response was more figurative than concrete, refusing to pin down the Soviet Union to any sort of official defense agreement. Laid to rest only momentarily, this issue emerged again in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Whether or not Soviet offensive weapons were sent to Cuba at Castro's request, as alleged by the Soviets, or were installed there by mutual agreement, as Castro later claimed [Ref. 12], is not an issue to be taken up here. The answer to that question may never be known.

### C. FRICTION BETWEEN MOSCOW AND HAVANA

What is clear is the negative effect the Missile Crisis had on relations between the Soviet and Cuban leaderships. The Soviets were quickly disillusioned from their grandiose perceptions about the potential for revolution in the Caribbean. They soon sobered to the fact that this confrontation clearly pointed to the limitations of Soviet conventional forces (the Soviet Navy) to deal head-to-head with the United States; and that, in addition, John F. Kennedy's refusal to be cowed led the basically conservative Soviet leadership to conclude that, for the time being, it would be best to let the dust settle in the American backyard. For two years, relations between Moscow and Havana were soured because of Castro's anger over having been left out of the settlement of the Missile Crisis.

The 1960's were a time of continued friction and failure for the Soviet/Cuban team. The disappointing results of Cuban-backed revolutionaries in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Columbia, Venezuela, and Bolivia added to the sense of let-down. More basic was the fundamental disagreement between the two collaborating leaderships over how best to proceed with revolutionary aims in the region.

The disagreement between the Soviets and Cubans in the 1960's centered around methods. Moscow was opposed to Cuba's promotion of armed struggle in the region because it would run counter to their desire to establish state-to-state



relations in Central and Latin America and would unnecessarily antagonize the United States. Castro and his fellow revolutionaries wished to promote revolution in several Latin countries simultaneously, utilizing a guerrilla force, and thus bypass Communist Parties. As one Sovietologist, Jiri Valenta, argues:

Castro, who was in favor of a "genuinely revolutionary road," criticized the Soviet Union for dealing with capitalist governments in Latin America. In adhering to Ernesto "Che" Guevara's concept of guerrilla/peasantry insurgency, Castro's strategy in the Caribbean Basin and elsewhere in South America in the 1960's, contradicted and even challenged the Soviet doctrine allowing for diversified roads to socialism. The Soviets in the late 1960's were unwilling and unable to sponsor Castro's call to create "two or three," and even "four or five more Vietnams" for the United States in Latin America. As a result of Cuban relations in the late 1960's were unsatisfactory, at times strained almost to the breaking point. [Ref. 13]

Relations with the Soviets remained complex throughout the sixties, marked by mutual misunderstanding and mistrust. Castro's unpredictable ideological shifts, his attempts to subordinate the Cuban Communist Party to his personal rule, and his eclectic approach in dealing with Cuba's economic ills all served to add to Moscow's unease. In his own view, Castro saw the Soviets as neither sufficiently supportive of his revolutionary aims, nor adequately consultative concerning Soviet/U.S. negotiations addressing Cuban sovereignty.

Cuba's aggressive foreign policy was directly in opposition to the Soviet's pursuit of détente, which to the Cubans, was a seeming abdication of Socialist internationalism.



This caused vocal demands for increased Soviet aid to revolutionary movements. [Ref. 14]

For ten years, this haggling continued, accommodations being made on each side, but never for very long. Further complicating Soviet/Cuban relations in the 1960's was China's interest in the new Marxist policy in the Caribbean. The Chinese were attracted by Castro's guerrilla strategies, and revolutionary--almost radical--brand of communism. It appeared that Fidel Castro was cut from similar cloth as his admirers in Peking--at least in Chinese perceptions.

Castro was keen to sense the potential for playing the Communist giants against each other to the benefit of his regime, and did so, much to the chagrin of the Soviet leadership. Although the Chinese were ideologically more attractive to the Cubans, they were no match for the Soviets in their ability to render Cuba economic succor. When heavy U.S. sanctions were imposed on the Cubans in the 1960's, it was the Soviets, and not the Chinese, who were able and willing to fill the vacuum thus created. In an attempt to make amends for Castro's hurt feelings over the handling of the Missile Crisis, in 1963 the U.S.S.R. made such favorable trade agreement offers that Castro was willing to risk offending the Chinese by visiting the U.S.S.R. [Ref. 15].

In the early 1970's, trade between China and Cuba increased, but not nearly at the same rate as that between Cuba and the Soviets. Except for a brief period in the

middle 1960's, Cuban trade with China rarely exceeded (and was often less than) ten percent of its total trade [Ref. 16]. Thus, in a choice of patrons, Castro's Marxist-revolutionary state appears to have made its choice, not based on ideology, but on dollars and cents.

Throughout the 1960's, another major bone of contention between the Soviets and Cubans was the situation in Venezuela, and Castro's role in the attempted overthrow of the democratic government of Betancourt, which had come to power about the same time as Castro. Betancourt, a reformist democrat, had taken some of the limelight away from Fidel's revolution. Castro viewed him as a threat to his own regional designs. The Soviets, too, saw the situation in Venezuela as threatening. Where Moscow and Havana parted ways was on the issue of the best method in dealing with the perceived threat. The Cubans were closely allied with the dissident Venezuelan National Liberation Front (FALN), as well as with other guerrilla groups. On the other hand, the Soviets insisted upon working within the structure of the Venezuelan Communist Party. This difference generally has been viewed as a primary factor of the failure of the guerrilla movement in Venezuela. The Cubans were highly critical of the Soviet's failure to assist materially and politically in the guerrilla movement in favor of more conservative means. In turn, the Soviets accused Cubans of pursuing left-wing extremist policies. The overall effect of the failure of the Venezuelan insurgency

was to dampen for the next decade any Soviet perspectives and expectations concerning the potential for revolution in the region. In the words of William Luers:

The Venezuelan Government's victory over the guerrillas was first and foremost the result of nearly a decade of combining wise political and economic policies with forceful military action, supported, by the way, with substantial U.S. military assistance. The failure of the guerrilla movement in Venezuela in the late 1960's persuaded the Soviets that the Cuban vision of revolutionary potential was wrong, and was not in line with Soviet interests. The failure in Venezuela helped to persuade the Cubans that they needed to take two steps backward on the revolutionary issue. [Ref. 17]

Cuba came to a turning point in 1968 with the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. The Cuban economy was in no better shape than at the outset of Castro's initial attempts to revitalize it, and no doubt these troubles were exacerbated by a punitive cutback in Soviet oil deliveries in 1967 [Ref. 18]. That the Cubans had finally been brought into line in 1968 is evidenced by Castro's support (albeit qualified) to the above-mentioned Soviet intervention. Most of the Cuban-based guerrilla movements in Latin America, including the Che Guevara group in Bolivia, were dead--or nearly so. Perhaps the fear of a U.S. response against Cuba for the Soviet move into Czechoslovakia, coupled with the failure of his revolutionary focus and an ailing economy, served as the final conglomeration of events which broke Fidel Castro's rebellious and confrontal stance.

#### D. IMPROVED RELATIONS

The 1970's saw a marked increase of economic, political, and military ties between the Soviets and Cubans. The failure to achieve a \$10 million sugar harvest in 1970 marked the end of Castro's efforts to maintain an autonomous political program. The resulting economic disorganization served to underscore Cuba's dependence on Soviet aid. By 1972, satisfied that the U.S.S.R. now called the tune, Brezhnev went beyond all previous Soviet pronouncements on Cuba's precise position in the Communist world [Ref. 19]. Speaking in June 1972, during Castro's first visit to Moscow in eight years, Brezhnev declared:

Soviet Cuba is not alone....Its international positions, its interests and security are safeguarded reliably not only by the firm policy of the Communist Party of Cuba and the heroism of its revolutionary people, but also by the support and political weight of the U.S.S.R....We stated this many times before, and we are repeating this with a full sense of responsibility now. [Ref. 20]

In July 1972, Cuba was formally admitted to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), the first instance of such admission of a Communist country not geographically contiguous to the Soviet bloc. In 1974, Brezhnev made the first visit of a Soviet party leader to Latin America to formalize a new set of political and economic agreements between the U.S.S.R. and Cuba. Thus the world witnessed the beginning of the period often referred to as the "collaborative 1970's." Revolution could wait; Cuba needed to build and solidify its economy. What no one could foresee

during this period was the impact Cuba would have in the Third World as a tool of the Soviet Politburo.

Having become a valuable partner for the Soviets, Cuba has tended to take sides in Sino/Soviet disputes over the last two decades. Since the Chinese were in no position to match the Soviets in economic or military aid to the Cubans, this no doubt was an important factor in the Cuban decision to side with the Soviets in Third World forums. Of greater significance has been Cuba's new and unique role as a fighting force of the Soviets in Africa. Fidel Castro had far closer ties than the Soviets with many African revolutionary leaders in the 1960's and 1970's. Cuba had been providing hospitality and training to the revolutionary forces of such African leaders as Ben Bella and Nkrumah, and began to send military missions and combat troops to Algeria and the Congo (Brazzaville)[Ref. 21].

When the escalation of the Angolan Civil War brought South African troops into the conflict in 1975, the Soviets refrained from sending the Popular Movement for the National Liberation of Angola (MPLA) any additional arms. Cuba promptly filled the vacuum by sending its own troops via converted freighters and obsolete aircraft [Ref. 22]. In 1978, Cuban troops with Soviet advisors provided support for a besieged Ethiopian Government under attack from Somalia, which proved decisive in that conflict. Estimates are between 16,000 and 17,000 Cuban combat troops were



involved in the conflict [Ref. 23]. Cuban military involvement overseas to the present time is prodigious. Cuban forces abroad today by best estimate are: 19,000 in Angola; 750 in the Congo; 3,000 in Ethiopia; 750 in Mozambique; 2,000 in Iraq; 3,000 in Libya; 3,000 in Nicaragua; and 300 in South Yemen [Ref. 24].

### III. SOVIET STRATEGY IN THE CARIBBEAN BASIN

#### A. OPTIMISM VERSUS PESSIMISM

A common criticism of the Reagan Administration has been the charge that it seeks to turn a North-South issue (i.e., social revolution in Central America and the attempt to throw off the "shackles" of U.S. imperialism) into an East-West issue. The problem should be obvious to even the most casual observer that the diverse factors at play in Central America are further complicated by the role of Soviet/Cuban influence. An effective U.S. policy can no more ignore the Soviet hand at work than it could the political, social, economic, or historical factors in Central America. In the words of former Mexican President Lopez Portillo, the Caribbean Basin has been converted into a "frontier" between the United States and the U.S.S.R.: "The U.S. problem is not with Nicaragua or Cuba...the U.S. problem is with the Soviet Union." [Ref. 25]

Soviet activity and attitudes in the Caribbean Basin reflect optimism or pessimism, depending upon their perceptions of the potential for revolutionary activity in the region, and the perceived "correlation of forces," an almost mystical measure for which the Soviets have a great affection. Soviet optimism in response to new and promising revolutionary situations peaked following the revolution in Cuba (1959),

Grenada (February 1979), and Nicaragua (June 1979). The last two events acted as a strong counterbalance to the ambivalence seen in Soviet writings on the potential for armed struggle in the U.S. backyard. Both Grenada and Nicaragua proved that Socialist-oriented revolutions are possible in the geographic proximity of the United States. That the Carter administration tolerated these events, as well as the growing insurgency in El Salvador, was a fact not lost on the Soviets.

A careful reading of the Soviets' analysis of Carter's policies, however, suggests the Soviet belief that Carter, with his new emphasis on human rights, was less able to use "traditional methods" of "power politics" to deal with the revolutionary wave (or its supporters in Cuba and the U.S.S.R. for that matter) which had materialized during the final two years of his tenure, 1979-1980. The Soviets seem to suggest, at least indirectly, that this support for the new revolutionary movements in the Caribbean Basin and Central America was less costly under Carter than his successor. This perception further argues against any "backing down" or dampening of the Soviet attitude toward Central America in the early days of this decade. [Ref. 26]

The Carter administration's policy toward Latin America was one of reaction instead of positive action. The administration sought policies which were supportive of strong, friendly, and independent governments that would practice democracy and protect human rights, economic development, and security against hostile forces. Such policies, in the words of former Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Viron P. Vaky, would "align us with the forces of change, of democracy, and of peaceful development that alone can overcome socioeconomic inequities." [Ref. 27]

No overall framework for formulating policies toward Latin America evolved during the Carter administration, regardless of the well-intentioned meaning of the previously cited goals. Latin American policy became, in fact, a reaction to one crisis after another: The Panama Canal Treaties, Mexican economic and social conditions, the fall of Somoza and the rise of the Sandinistas, the Soviet military brigade in Cuba, the political disintegration of Central America, and the refugee flows of Haitians and Cubans. These events added to the conceptual weakness of Carter's Latin American policy. [Ref. 28]

The Soviet leadership observed the turmoil in the region, and the Carter administrations' seeming inability to cope with that turmoil as an opportunity for increased activity through its client-state, Cuba. This time of new "opportunity" is reflected in Soviet writing, with the Nicaraguan experience as the watershed. The Sandinistas, in the Soviet view, skillfully exploited U.S. weaknesses in 1979, and demonstrated that a pro-American regime can be defeated in the U.S. strategic backyard. In World Marxist Review, we read:

The Sandinistas were able to use the contradictions among the ruling circles of the USA, doing so flexibly, if at an understandable risk. In the present-day conditions, [Underline mine.] a pro-imperialist regime can be defeated not only in distant areas of Africa or Asia, but in that part of the Latin American region seen by the USA as its closest "strategic hinterland," and where traditional U.S. influence is particularly strong. [Ref. 29]

In the Soviet perception, the correlation of forces had shifted toward Moscow.

The operationalization of this new attitude is reflected in the Cuban strategy of aggressively promoting armed conflict. This Cuban strategy is reminiscent of that of the 1960's with one important exception. Instead of throwing in obstacles, the U.S.S.R. has backed Cuban efforts to incorporate non-doctrinaire groups into broad political-military fronts dedicated to armed struggle. With Castro in the visible lead, the Soviets supported Cuban policies through massive financial aid (\$8 million a day) and military assistance to Cuba [Ref. 30].

The new Soviet/Cuban strategy departs from earlier efforts to develop state-to-state relations which traditionally has been a strong motivation for the Soviets in Latin America. The 1960's were a turning point in Soviet ties with Latin America. Castro established diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. in 1960, and was soon followed by the Goulart government in Brazil in 1961, and Eduardo Frei of Chile who exchanged diplomatic representatives with Moscow in 1964. After the temporary setback of the Cuban Missile Crisis 1962, and Havana's slow, but sure, acquiescence to Soviet pressure for moderation, the building of diplomatic channels for the Soviets continued. The pro-Soviet parties appeared rather clearly to prefer electoral participation and the formation of popular fronts to armed struggle [Ref. 31].



Between 1968 and 1970, the Soviets exchanged diplomatic representatives with five Andean countries: Bolivia, Peru, Columbia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. In the 1970's, relations were established in and around the Caribbean with Costa Rica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, and Nicaragua. (The Soviet Union broke relations with Chile in 1973 after the fall of Allende.)

In most cases, the U.S.S.R. played the role of suitor: first it secured recognition of the Soviet state; and secondly, it exchanged diplomatic representatives; and finally, it established economic, cultural, and political relations. The U.S.S.R. did not ordinarily make ideological or political criteria conditions of diplomatic relations [Ref. 32]. The goal of state-to-state diplomatic relations with most of the nations of the world, especially the Third World, and specifically Latin America, has been high on the list of Soviet objectives in its never-ending quest for self-legitimization as a major power.

#### B. STRATEGY SINCE 1979

Since 1979, this strategy has taken a back seat to the concept of promoting armed conflict in Central America. With what one must assume is full Soviet approval, Cuba is engaged in uniting the radical left, committing it to the use of violence, training it in warfare and terrorism, and attempting to use it to destroy existing governments and replace them with Marxist-Leninist regimes on the Cuban model [Ref. 33].

The pessimism reflected in Soviet thought concerning the "inevitable" spread of socialism in the Third World was a thing of the past [Ref. 34].

It is important to note the changing attitude of the role of the Communist Party in the struggle for socialism. An important sectarian aspect of the differences in attitude between Moscow and Havana has been the proper role for orthodox Moscow-leaning Communist Parties in political and revolutionary change. Moscow's difference with the Castro regime over this point has long been an issue, sometimes theoretical, although not always, which has created misunderstanding and lack of coordination in various Central and Latin American political arenas. The role of the party has been at the center of Soviet disputes with China, and the Soviet moves in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland [Ref. 35]. There is ample evidence that this issue is a continuing source of difference with Cuba. Castro has always preferred to deal with brother revolutionaries than with party bureaucrats. Again from William Luers:

In an extended discussion of this problem in... Latinskaya Amerika...M. F. Gornov invokes Lenin to support his basic point on the role of the Party. "It is not enough simply to call ourselves the 'vanguard' or 'advance detachment,' we must also act in such a way that all other detachments realize and admit that we are taking the lead. This charge of Lenin must not be forgotten today," adds Gornov, "now that the various forces have joined the anti-imperialist movement." [Ref. 36]

Soviet embarrassment by the failure of the Moscow-backed "Nicaraguan Socialist Party" to play an integral role in the

Sandinista revolution is yet another example of this ideological split. Moscow has consistently maneuvered to control revolutionary events by exhorting its parties not to sit on the sidelines. T. Ye Vorozheykino wrote in Latinskaya Amerika of:

...the regrettable experience of the Nicaraguan Socialist Party which clearly demonstrated that a party which does not unite with other leftist forces faces the root danger of being left on the sidelines of the revolutionary struggle. [Ref. 37]

These Soviet lamentations serve as evidence that revolutionary movements in Central America, and elsewhere in the Third World, are not only Soviet-sponsored, but preferably Soviet-controlled. It is likely that the Communist Party in El Salvador, at Soviet insistence, will take an increasingly active role in future actions against the Duarte government. This may also be the case in other Central American countries.

#### IV. THE SOVIET/CUBAN THREAT

##### A. SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE CARIBBEAN: HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE AND IMPLICATIONS

In the last twenty-odd years, the Soviet Union has ruptured the U.S. security sphere on the southern flank. It has accomplished this significant task through the use of naval forces, and its unsinkable staging base/aircraft carrier--Cuba.

The Soviet Navy has become a far-flung, world-ranging, blue water force making its presence felt throughout the world as an extension of the Kremlin. The Soviet Navy is a symbol of the fraternity of peace-loving peoples. In recent years, our warships have made scores of visits to countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, America, and everywhere Soviet seamen are welcomed as honored guests, sincere friends, as envoys and defenders of peace. [Ref. 38]

These words of then-Defense Minister Marshal Grechko almost 15 years ago heralded the beginning of a new era in Soviet naval activity. The coastal navy of the 1950's and 1960's was giving way to a globe-trotting, flag-showing force which would take its lessons from the U.S. Navy. The utility of a blue water navy to the political strategists in Moscow was slowly becoming a reality. Port visits as described above by Grechko were becoming a frequent reality.

Fleet Admiral Sergey Gorshkov's Soviet Navy is one with a political mission no less significant than its military role. Gorshkov's tremendous influence in the changed naval doctrine of the Soviet Union can be observed in the rhetoric

and actions of Soviet naval "experts," and the actual deployment of Soviet naval forces in the Caribbean. "Gunboat diplomacy" and "showing of the flag," once the exclusive extensions of national foreign policy for great Western powers, has become an implement of standard usage for the Soviet Union. Therefore, before illustrating the military threat from the Soviet and Cuban naval forces in the Caribbean, a brief review of Soviet declaratory policy toward their naval forces in the Caribbean Basin is in order. This policy (probably under the urging of Gorshkov and other hard-liners in the ruling elite) has led to such significant tests of U.S. patience and political will as the Cienfuegos incident, and increased Soviet (and later Cuban) naval presence in the region.

Gorshkov's desire for a blue water force sufficient to provide the state with political clout is best exemplified in these words from his now classic work, The Sea, Power of the State: "With the emergence of the Navy onto the ocean expanses, the Soviet Union acquired new and more wide-spread opportunities to utilize it in peacetime support of her own state interests." [Ref. 39]

In addition to the above, in Gorshkov's view, sea power, if utilized efficiently, can be employed in "suppressing the aggressive aspirations of imperialism, of deterring military adventures, and of decisively countering threats to the security of peoples on the part of imperialist powers." [Ref. 40]



More specifically, recent senior Soviet naval authorities have seen the role of the Navy as twofold: first, as a combat force capable of exerting stability in a potentially volatile situation; and second, to render aid to developing countries in response to aggression [Ref. 41]. Cuba and the Caribbean fall into the category referred to above. Soviet naval presence, however, has not been used as a stabilizing influence in the Caribbean thus far, but merely as a psychological thorn in the side of the United States. It is critical to note that this holds true only for Soviet surface units which are relatively easy to locate and destroy in time of conflict. The presence of Soviet nuclear submarines presents a significantly more serious problem--one far more real than psychological as it concerns Soviet/Cuban maritime activity.

Soviet naval writing, in addition to addressing the perceived political and military roles of the Soviet Navy, also serves as a rhetorical point of departure against U.S. activity in the Caribbean Basin. For instance, in regard to the Panama Canal situation in 1979, Morskoy Sbornik stated:

The American aggressors do not want to get out of this strategically important area. The paradoxicality of the situation that this had arisen lies in the fact that the Americans, who are the de facto owners of this important waterway cannot exercise unshared command of the Canal Zone and not impose their will on the Panamanian people. [Ref. 42]

And, an even more severe criticism from the same source two years later:

While using political and cultural cooperation among the members of this organization as a cover,

the United States in fact uses the Organization of Central American States for armed intervention in the domestic affairs of countries in the Caribbean. [Ref. 43]

The Soviet claims as to their purposes in the Caribbean have been examined, but what can be determined from their actions? What is the real aim of the Soviet Union in its forays into the Caribbean Basin?

In a discussion between the author and Michel Tatu, that French Sovietologist expressed his belief that the Soviets repeatedly seek to disprove the notion of the Monroe Doctrine as it applies to naval forces, and to test the limits of U.S. patience and tolerance. Like U.S. deployments into the Black Sea, Soviet naval presence in the Caribbean likewise seeks the level of tolerance of the opposing superpower. There the similarity ends. Soviet naval presence in the Caribbean has become far more than a symbolic gesture, having metamorphasized itself into a genuine security threat [Ref. 44]. The term "naval presence" covers more ground than the simple utilization of local naval facilities. It includes additional elements such as priority for a particular nation's warships and the high-visibility and commensurate status such presence creates.

To understand that threat as it exists today, a brief review of the chronology of Soviet naval and air activity in the Caribbean will be covered. This threat is particularly worrisome when viewed in the light of Cuba's tremendous military ascendancy in the same region.

Soviet combatent deployments to Cuba began in July 1969. By the fall of 1970, construction of a submarine base had begun at Cienfuegos. Although this base eventually was dis-established by agreement between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., it was yet another attempt by the Soviets to strengthen their foothold in the region while simultaneously testing the political will of the U.S. leadership.

The exact terms of that agreement remain unclear to this day. The Cienfuegos Agreement of 1970 was negotiated in large part by Henry Kissinger (then National Security Advisor to President Nixon), and Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin. The basic agreement was a sort of fuzzy extension of the 1962 understanding over Soviet offensive nuclear weapons in Cuba. These were, of course, land-based weapons. In 1970, it was necessary to agree upon what naval forces were "strategic" in nature. The issue was murky from the beginning.

The initial U.S. response to Soviet penetration of the Caribbean was neither firm nor unequivocal. The White House and State Department had no comment on the Soviet naval visits. The Department of Defense maintained constant surveillance of the Soviet units, and kept the press relatively well-informed of their whereabouts. The interpretation of this early deployment was limited to such statements as: "the Department [of Defense] views the Soviet ship transit as an 'illustration of growing Soviet capabilities!'" [Ref. 45]

The initial deployment of the Soviet Navy had been made prior to the Cienfuegos incident. This first deployment included a guided missile cruiser (KYNDA-class), a guided missile destroyer (KILDIN-class), a guided missile frigate (KASHIN-class), two submarines (one nuclear-powered), a submarine tender, and an oiler. Following the Cuban visit, port calls were made to Barbados and Martinique [Ref. 46]. In May 1970, a second task group entered the Caribbean composed of a KRESTA I-class guided missile cruiser, a KANIN-class guided missile destroyer, two FOXTROT-class diesel submarines, an ECHO-II nuclear cruise missile submarine, an oiler, and a submarine tender. Havana and Cienfuegos were visited, but no other Caribbean ports. This was the first occasion that the West witnessed the employment of Bear-D reconnaissance aircraft in the region--a precedent of no less import than the appearance of Soviet warships. In April 1970, two of these aircraft flew nonstop from bases in Murmansk, down the Norwegian Sea, across the Atlantic, and landed in Cuba [Ref. 47]. This early flight plan, part of Okean-70, has become a familiar flight plan in the 1970's and 1980's.

In August 1970, U.S. intelligence had determined that construction activity in and around Cienfuegos was underway for some sort of naval facility, the aim of which would be the support of Soviet submarines. The first public reaction from the U.S. administration came on September 25th, when the White House, basing its statement upon the 1962 Cuban



Missile Crisis "understanding" between Kennedy and Khrushchev, stated that the President would "...view the establishment of a strategic base in the Caribbean with utmost seriousness."

[Ref. 48]

Two weeks of secret U.S./Soviet negotiations were followed on October 10th by the departure from Cienfuegos of the submarine tender and the rescue tug. A presidential statement on 4 January 1971 revealed an understanding reached between the two nations on 11 October, and a formal TASS announcement on 13 October that the Soviet Union was not building a base in Cuba was corroborated by the Department of Defense [Ref. 49].

The 1970 Cienfuegos Agreement expanded upon the 1962 Missile Crisis understanding which had centered around the concept of prohibiting the introduction of Soviet offensive nuclear weapons in Cuba. In a radio and television broadcast on 4 January 1971, President Nixon described the agreement over Cienfuegos as an extension of the Missile Crisis understanding in which President Kennedy had been assured by the Soviet leadership that the U.S.S.R. would never place offensive nuclear weapons in Cuba again. Earlier, the State Department had issued the following statement concerning the issue of Soviet weapons and bases in the Western Hemisphere:

State Department officials said today that the United States had received private assurances from the Soviet Union that it would not introduce offensive weapons into the Western Hemisphere, or establish bases for the use of such weapons. It



was understood that "offensive weapons" in this context was synonymous with nuclear weapons. [Ref. 50]

The Cienfuegos Agreement probably included the issue of servicing nuclear submarines from Cuba:

Reliable American sources indicate that the heart of the understanding is on an unwritten pledge by the Soviet Union not to base missile-carrying nuclear submarines, store nuclear weapons, or install repair and servicing facilities anywhere in the Western Hemisphere. [Ref. 51]

In the same article, the subject of the submarine tender was directly addressed:

Mr. McCloskey [State Department spokesman] said that Soviet naval craft--including a submarine tender and two barges used to collect radioactive effluent from nuclear submarine reactors--were still at Cienfuegos. Their continuing presence, he said, would not be construed as a violation of the unwritten understanding. [Ref. 52]

As mentioned earlier, the precise details of the Cienfuegos Agreement are still a mystery. The interpretation of the bounds of that agreement seemed to have shifted with time as evidenced by the somewhat contradictory content of statements from U.S. officials subsequent to the agreement. If the Cienfuegos Agreement was an extension or supplement to the U.S./Soviet 1962 understanding over offensive nuclear weapons in Cuba, then the topic of discussion and agreement would be over nuclear ballistic missiles. But was it? In a January 1971 television address, President Nixon stated: "Now, in the event nuclear submarines were serviced either in Cuba or from Cuba, that would be a violation of the understanding." [Ref. 53]

If President Nixon was including Soviet nuclear attack submarines in his policy statement, was he excluding the diesel-electric, ballistic missile submarine (SSB)? It could be argued that this lack of precision in the President's language was the loophole through which the Soviets eventually would drive their GOLF-class SSB's into the Caribbean for both deployments and port visits to Cuba.

On the other hand, Henry Kissinger concerned himself with bases and not naval units, and as a result, he concentrated much of his energy in discussions with Gromyko and Dobrynin on the basing issue. This concern with basing was extended to tenders (contrary to the earlier State Department stand on the same subject), and communicated to Dobrynin by Kissinger after the 14 February 1971 arrival in Havana of a submarine tender with a Soviet Task Force, in addition to a NOVEMBER-class nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN), and the May 1971 arrival of a tender with an ECHO-II SSGN. Pressure on the Soviets led to the withdrawal of the tender shortly after its arrival in May. In his memoirs, Kissinger wrote that he considered this a significant victory, for not only did the Soviets withdraw, they also did not attempt to deploy what the Nixon administration considered the most important combination: a tender with a nuclear-powered, ballistic missile submarine [Ref. 54].

The ambiguity of the Nixon administration's position on Soviet naval activity in the Caribbean was again exploited

by the Politburo in May of 1972 with the port visit to Cuba of a GOLF-II SSB in company with a submarine tender and destroyer. The GOLF-II visit to Havana preceeded the Nixon/Brezhnev summit in Moscow later that month. If there was a connection between the two events, it has yet to be substantiated. Indeed, it may simply have been a case of the right hand not altogether knowing what the left hand was doing.

GOLF-II was to visit a Cuban port again (Havana), and with much fanfare, in April 1974. This proved to be the second and last GOLF-II deployment to the Caribbean--perhaps as some Soviet last, face-saving gesture.

The lesson to be drawn from the above is as simple as it is important. Between 1969 and 1974, the Soviet Union had set out to test U.S. resolve as it pertained to the ability of Soviet naval forces, equipped for the strategic warfare role, to ply Caribbean waters and utilize Cuban facilities. The United States responded firmly, albeit sometimes unclearly, in each situation as it unfolded. Testing Caribbean waters with their strategic forces, the Soviets found that these forays were met by a frosty U.S. reception, each and every time. To their credit, Moscow's leadership maximized the potential of each policy ambiguity presented by the Nixon administration as it pertained to Soviet strategic assets in the Caribbean--hence the SSB deployments. Yet, the time for experimenting with such forays came to an end with the Soviets understanding that the White House, regardless of

who occupied its oval office, would accept no hostile SSB's or SSBN's in the strategic backyard of the United States. The unacceptable nature of that threat had eventually been communicated.

It is interesting to note that when the Soviets sought a response to U.S. deployments of Pershing II (IRBM) and Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCM) into Europe in 1984, their response was to place SSGN's off the eastern coast of the United States, and to bring DELTA-class SSBN's out of their Arctic bastions into the Atlantic. The response was not to send strategic missile armed naval units into the Caribbean Basin. The sensitivity of such a move was not lost upon the Kremlin. The lesson had been learned.

#### B. THE CUBAN THREAT: STRATEGIC

Cuba now poses a threat that has the potential to alter the geostrategic position of the United States in the Caribbean Basin, and in the event of a general war or U.S./Soviet conflict elsewhere, severely complicate the global military equation for the United States.

Cuba is a small island-nation which, ironically, is the number-two military power (after the United States) in the Caribbean Basin. The threat Cuba presents stems from that nation's inextricable military ties with the U.S.S.R. and the closely collaborative nature of their patron/client relationship. The impact Cuba has on U.S. security in the region is greatly amplified by the island's geographic position, sitting



astride the Caribbean Sea, commanding the entrance to the Gulf of Mexico and the Florida Straits. The eastern approaches to Central America are also in the Cuban military net. The transport of crude oil to this country is accomplished through use of the Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC). These ships are between 175,000 and 400,000 deadweight tons, and the even larger Ultra Large Crude Carrier (ULCC) is over 400,000 tons. They have drafts of between 60 and 90 feet, thus severely restricting the areas of ocean in which they may travel safely. In the Caribbean Basin, this restricts those ports which may service such ships (Fig. 1), and the open and conditional ocean spaces in which such ships may travel (Fig. 2). Therefore, the already critical chokepoint areas are made even easier to delineate where Soviet and Cuban forces may concentrate.

The strategic threat Cuba poses takes two forms. The first and most plausible is the threat to Caribbean sealanes of communication (SLOC) presented by the Soviet and Cuban air and naval forces. From a Rand Corporation study:

In the event of a U.S./Soviet confrontation, a hostile Cuba, as an ally of Moscow, could endanger the sealanes (SLOC's) in the Caribbean that are vital, not only to the United States and Caribbean Basin states, but to Western Europe as well....To be sure, a rational Cuban leadership would seek to avoid being drawn into a war with the United States because the conflict would result in heavy civilian as well as military casualties on the island. Still there are conditions under which the strategic threat posed by Cuba cannot be ignored without serious peril to U.S. security, and these conditions could turn out to be beyond the control of even the most rational Cuban leaders. [Ref. 55]





Figure 1. Major Oil Ports Serving the Gulf/Caribbean.

Source: Anderson, Thomas D., Geopolitics of the Caribbean, Hoover Institute, 1984, p. 116.

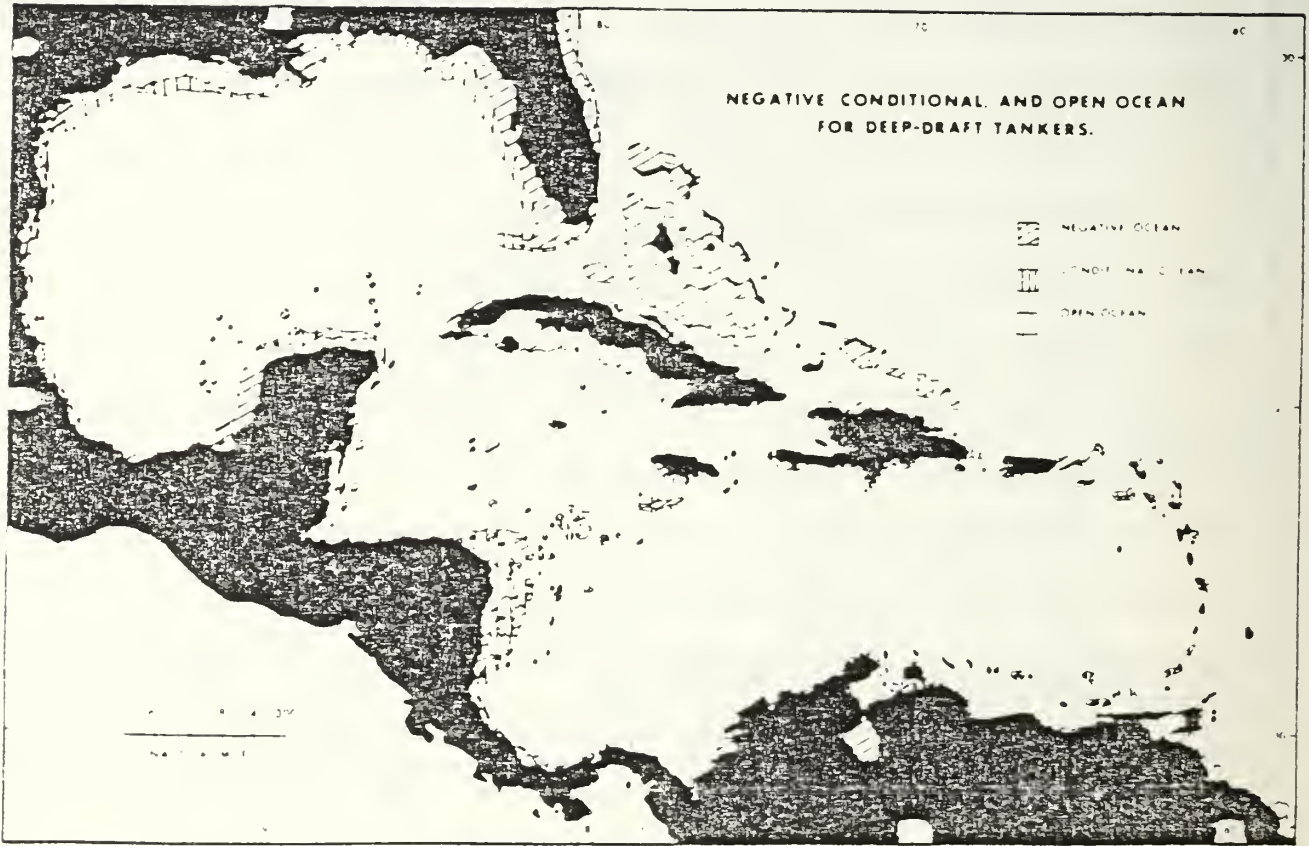


Figure 2. Negative, Conditional, and Open Ocean for Deep-Draft Tankers.

Source: Anderson, Thomas D., Geopolitics of the Caribbean, Hoover Institute, 1984, p. 118.

The primary threat to the SLOC's comes from the Soviet collaboration with Cuba. The Soviet Navy and Air Force have had great success in penetrating the Caribbean Basin through a gradual process, and overall acquiescence on the part of the United States. As noted earlier, the Soviets were forced to halt their construction of a base for nuclear submarines in Cienfuegos in the fall of 1970. Regardless and irrespective of this setback, the Soviet Navy is a far different force than that which the United States faced during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. It now is a legitimate blue water navy, and considers the Caribbean one of its operating areas. Between 1969 and 1981, eleven Soviet task forces of varying composition sortied into the Caribbean with nearly all of the units making port visits to Cuba [Ref. 56]. Early in 1984, a VICTOR-class nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN), experiencing propulsion problems in the mid-Atlantic, eventually was towed to Cuba by a Soviet auxiliary unit for repairs.

The problem which a near constant Soviet naval presence presents for U.S. planners should be obvious. The Nixon/Brezhnev understanding after the Cienfuegos incident of 1971 is nearly meaningless. The Soviets have accomplished their aim of a naval presence in the Basin without a direct confrontation. Simply put, this presence means that at the outbreak of hostilities between the Soviet Union and the United States, Soviet naval units--especially nuclear submarines--will already be in place for SLOC interdiction.

This would present the U.S. Navy with the complex mission of dealing with these submarines, further taxing U.S. anti-submarine warfare (ASW) assets which will be needed desperately in other NATO theaters, i.e., the North and Central Atlantic.

The second aspect of the Soviet/Cuban anti-SLOC capability also stems from Cuba as an unsinkable aircraft carrier. Soviet and Cuban air assets could prove crippling in a conventional anti-SLOC campaign. The Soviets regularly deploy their long-range TU-95 maritime reconnaissance aircraft to Cuba on southern swings from North Fleet bases. These aircraft, with a range of nearly 9,000 miles, are equipped for followup guidance of sea-targeted missiles launched from submarines or surface ships. Although old (c. 1965), slow, and highly vulnerable to interceptor aircraft, they are invaluable in their intelligence collection mode in a peacetime or near-war environment. These aircraft operate regularly from Cuba; in all likelihood they were destined to operate from the Point Salines airport in Grenada, and eventually would be able to operate from Nicaragua.

Table II, following, illustrates the prodigious capability and high quality of the Cuban Air Force as it exists today. With its MIG-23 FLOGGER-B (nonexport) aircraft, the Cuban Air Force could cause serious damage in the initial stages of a conventional conflict, especially to shipping in the Caribbean SLOC's. With a combat radius of over 500 nautical

TABLE II

CUBAN AIR FORCE

(Number in Uniform: 16,000)

Number/Squadron	Type	Aircraft Type	# of Aircraft
3	Fighter Ground Attack	MIG-23BN	36
1	Fighter Ground Attack	MIG-17	15
1	Interceptor	MIG-23E	15
2	Interceptor	MIG-21F	30
3	Interceptor	MIG-21PFM	34
2	Interceptor	MIG-21PFMA	20
8	Interceptor	MIG-21bc's	100
8	Helicopter	MI-4	60
		MI-8	40
		MI-24 Hind D	18
4	Transport	IL-14	16
		AN-2	35
		AN-24	3
		AN-26	22
		YAK-40	4

Source: The Military Balance: 1984-1985, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1984.



miles, MIG-23's could operate throughout the region, refueling in Nicaragua on one-way sorties which enhance on-target time. Even without the use of refueling, the combat radii of these aircraft allow them command of most of the Basin (Fig. 3). Again, in the event of a conventional conflict, the United States would attempt to destroy as many of these aircraft on the ground as quickly as possible. Not all would be destroyed in the initial airstrike (unless it was a tactical-nuclear strike, which would be a major escalation step for the U.S. to undertake). Those escaping the first U.S. airstrike could create havoc with suicidal missions.

The Cuban Air Defense System is worthy of mention at this juncture. It is a common misconception that in a lieisurely afternoon's flying, the U.S. Air Force would remove all military targets worth destroying from the Cuban landscape. The Cuban Air Defense System is impressive, comprised of the elements listed in Table III. These weapons, coupled with numerous combat aircraft would make for a costly U.S. operation. Even in a joint USAF/USN operation, the destruction or neutralization of the Cuban Armed Forces would be a costly and time-consuming task. Again, the use of tactical nuclear weapons would greatly simplify this problem for U.S. planners, but again, at what cost elsewhere? It is unlikely that the use of tactical nuclear weapons by the United States would go unanswered by the Soviets, who would feel compelled to respond in kind. In any event, scenarios of this type are beyond the scope of this study.

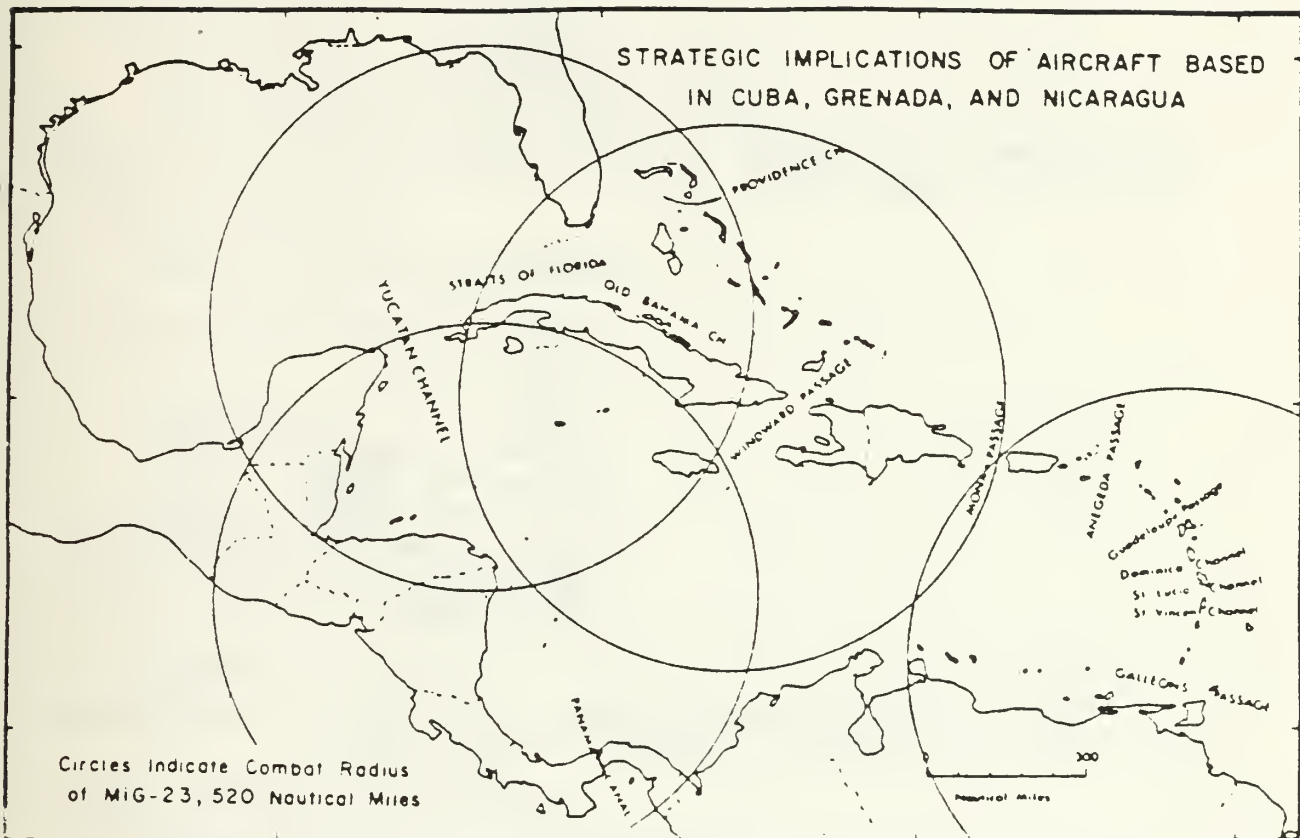


Figure 3. Strategic Implications of Aircraft Based in Cuba, Grenada, and Nicaragua.

Source: Anderson, Thomas D., Geopolitics of the Caribbean, Hoover Institute, 1984, p. 121.

TABLE III

CUBAN AIR DEFENSE

<u>Number of Battalions</u>	<u>Number/Type Weapons</u>
28	60/SA-2 140/SA-3 12/SA-6

In addition to the above, the following antiaircraft weapons exist in the Cuban inventory:

1,500 antiaircraft guns, including:

- ZU-23
- 37mm
- 57mm
- 85mm
- 100mm (towed)
- ZSU-23-4 (23mm)
- M-53 (Twin)/BTR-60P (30mm)
- ZSU-57 (Self-propelled 57mm)
- SA-7 (MSL)
- SA-9 (MSL)

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Source: The Military Balance: 1984-1985, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1984.

The last significant Soviet/Cuban threat to the SLOC's comes from Cuba's rapidly expanded Navy. The Cuban Navy, operating with modern Soviet platforms, sensors, and weapons, has become a force with which to reckon in the Caribbean. Table IV illustrates the present composition of the Cuban naval forces.

The Cuban Navy presents several problems for U.S. strategists. Submarines, especially diesel-electric submarines, are time-consuming and difficult targets to detect and track. Their quiet submerged operating sound level makes them nearly

TABLE IV

CUBAN NAVY  
(Number in uniform: 12,000)

<u>Ship Type</u>	<u>Number</u>
<u>Submarines</u>	
FOXTROT-class (SS), diesel/attack	3
WHISKEY-class (SS), diesel/attack (used for training)	1
<u>Surface Combatant</u>	
KONI-class (FF), frigate	2
<u>Patrol Craft (large)</u>	
SO-1	9
KRONSHADT	2
OSA-1 (STYX)	5
OSA-II (STYX)	13
KOMAR (STYX)	8
<u>Fast Attack Craft (Torpedo)</u>	
TURYA	8
P-6	6
P-4	12
<u>Fast Attack Craft (Patrol)</u>	
ZHUK	22
Coastal Patrol Craft	12
<u>Mine Warfare</u>	
YEVGENYA	10
SONYA	2
<u>Amphibious Warfare</u>	
POLNOČNY (LSM)	2
T-4 (LCM)	7

Source: The Military Balance: 1984-1985, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1984; and Leiken, Robert S., Central America: Anatomy of Conflict, Pergamon Press, 1984.

"invisible" to hunting anti-submarine warfare units. As a submarine warfare officer, having worked against the diesel-electric submarine from a nuclear submarine platform, this author can personally attest to the above. In the ASW world, the diesel submarine is said to make as much noise "as a flashlight."

The FOXTROT-class SS, with its 12,000 nautical-mile range (at five knots), can reach into any section of the Caribbean Basin. It is logical to assume that these valuable units already will be deployed at the onset of hostilities between the superpowers. It is illogical, therefore, to assume that U.S. tactical air assets will be afforded the opportunity to remove the SS threat through their destruction in-port. It will require the assignment of U.S. naval ASW assets (surface, subsurface, or air--or any combination of the three) to remove these dangerous foxes from the Caribbean henhouse. Those ASW assets will, in all likelihood, be needed elsewhere. The crux of the issue is the fact that in a general war, U.S. and NATO naval assets will be hard-pressed to meet all of their operational requirements, especially in the ASW world.

In 1983, the United States Navy conducted large-scale exercises in the Caribbean, involving two aircraft carrier battle groups (CVBG), the battleship New Jersey with escort, and auxiliary vessels, for a total of 43 warships. These combatants and support ships were stationed off Central American shores. This force cut deeply into the U.S. Navy's



total of 204 major surface combat vessels, prompting John Moore, editor of Jane's Fighting Ships, to comment that this sort of Caribbean scenario stretched the U.S. Navy "desperately tight....The U.S. Navy simply does not have enough ships; NATO does not have enough ships." [Ref. 57]

Combining Cuban FOXTROTS with Soviet SSN's and SSGN's, all of which probably will be prepositioned before the start of hostilities, the Kremlin provides U.S. and NATO forces with yet another crushing ASW burden, and a further drain of assets and energies from the next battle of the Atlantic.

Soviet deployment of some anti-SLOC submarines closer to the U.S. shoreline would oblige the United States to pull back its antisubmarine warfare (ASW) forces from Europe and tie them down on the Eastern Shore and in the Caribbean, giving the Soviets freer rein in the European theater. [Ref. 58]

Likely, Cuban submarines will be skillfully operated, thus providing ASW forces in pursuit frustrating and time-consuming targets. There is little reason to suspect otherwise, as these Cuban crews are Soviet-trained--a fact which the Soviets cheerfully advertise: "Cuban seamen carefully study the operations of Soviet navymen in the Great Patriotic War, and familiarize themselves with the present combat training of our Navy, and are better and better equipped." [Ref. 59] Soviet and Cuban naval forces train and practice together on a regular basis. Since 1976, joint Soviet/Cuban naval maneuvers have been held yearly [Ref. 60].

U.S. planners must ask the question: Can the United States afford to entangle its precious ASW assets in hunting

down Cuban diesel attack submarines in the Florida Straits or the Windward Passage? Clearly the answer is a resounding negative.

Yet another mission of the Cuban diesel submarine would be the covert insertion of Cuban or Soviet naval infantry or special warfare forces throughout the Basin, and possibly including the southern United States. Utilizing its diesel-electric submarines of far less capability, the German Navy was able to accomplish the same mission, placing agents on U.S. shores in the Second World War. The thousands of miles of Florida and the Gulf of Mexico/U.S. shoreline would be impossible to patrol adequately to prevent such actions from taking place. The Panama Canal Zone, and U.S. military facilities in Honduras also are likely targets for such adventures.

The offensive and defensive mine warfare capability of the Cuban Navy has been increased considerably since 1978 [Ref. 61]. The acquisition of ten plastic-hulled YEVGENYA-class minesweepers, plus two SONYA-class minesweeper/minehunters provides the Cubans with a viable counter to U.S. attempts at quarantine of that island-nation through the use of mines. These modern ships could sweep ahead for the FOXTROTS attempting to ingress or egress from Cuban ports, and could perform a similar task for the Cuban Navy's dangerous force of fast missile patrol craft.

Cuba's missile craft are fast, modern, and working in consort with Cuban MIG-23's and 21's, form a dangerous anti-SLOC force in the Caribbean. Here again, the contention is not that these forces could stand head-to-head with the U.S. and/or NATO forces, but that they will waste precious NATO time and assets in the event of general war. The missile craft become even more dangerous if working with the KONI-class frigate, which can provide limited anti-air coverage with its SAN-4 missiles and guns.

Finally, for those who remain skeptical of the threat posed by the modern, skillfully operated diesel attack submarines to a modern navy, the Falklands War serves as a recent illustration. Two German-built Argentine mini-diesel attack submarines (far less capable than the FOXTROT) successfully eluded Great Britain's Royal Navy with its state-of-the-art ASW capability--for the entire conflict. The eventual destruction of one of these ships took place only because the submarine was caught in daylight, in port, by a British airstrike.

The second major strategic threat presented by the Cubans is the potential for the Soviet Union launching a nuclear strike from Cuba against the United States. This is no more implausible than was the placing of offensive nuclear weapons in Cuba in 1962. Recent Soviet declarations raise the specter of the Missile Crisis revisited. In 1983, Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov said that the U.S.S.R. will soon

take steps that will graphically demonstrate the illusory nature of U.S. calculations on its geographical isolation, and the invulnerability of its own territory [Ref. 62].

The Soviets could use the Caribbean as a launching point in a number of ways:

- TU-26 Backfire Bombers could use at least three airstrips in Cuba for refueling, recovery, and relaunch for nuclear strikes. Figure 4 illustrates that the refueled range areas for Backfire (and follow-on strategic bomber, Blackjack) takes it to within range of the Caribbean.
- TU-95 Bears, now on regular reconnaissance missions up and down the U.S. Eastern Seaboard could be equipped with nuclear weapons for a first-strike mission.
- In response to the U.S./NATO deployment of Pershing-II and GLCM in Europe, the Soviets could place SS-20's in Cuba or Nicaragua. If placed surreptitiously, these mobile weapons would be difficult for U.S. tactical aircraft to locate and destroy in surgical strikes. The highly accurate triple-warheaded SS-20, with a range of 5,000 km, could provide the Soviets with a quick and accurate nuclear surgical strike capability against the continental United States.

If the Soviets were to place offensive nuclear weapons in Central America, without being discovered, the United States would not have the strategic superiority, nor the tactical naval superiority it enjoyed in 1962 to coerce the Soviet leaders into backing down from a flagrant act of aggression.

#### C. THE CUBAN THREAT: REGIONAL

As mentioned earlier, the success of the revolution in Nicaragua accelerated the revision of Soviet policy toward armed conflict in Central America. The President of the



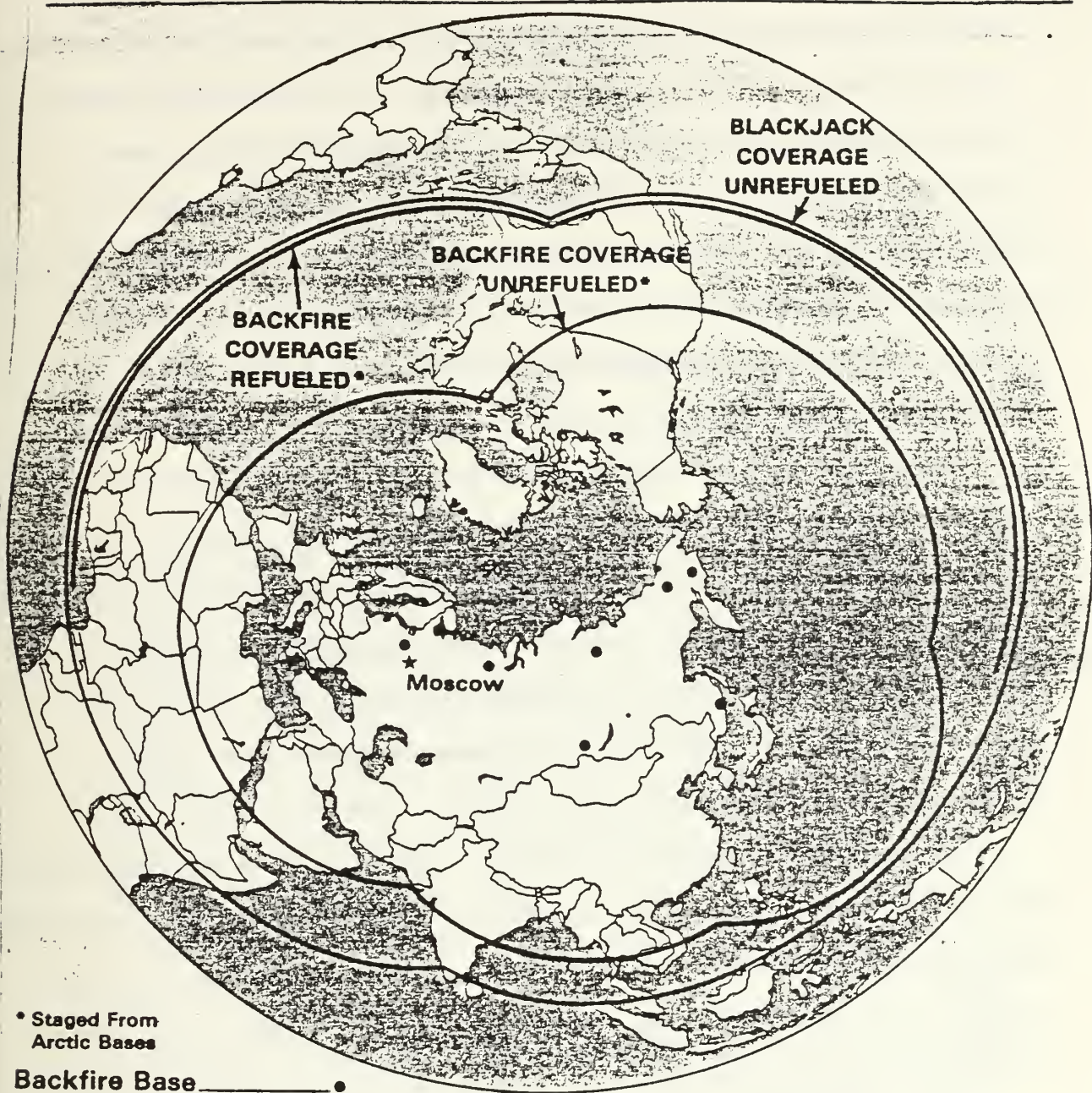


Figure 4. Blackjack and Backfire Coverage from Soviet Bases (two-way Missions).

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, Soviet Military Power Second Edition, 1983, p. 25.



Soviet Association of Friendship with Latin American countries, Viktor Volski, called the armed victory in Nicaragua a "model" to be followed in other countries; while Boris Ponomorev, Chairman of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, included the countries of Central America, for the first time, among Third World states undergoing revolutionary changes of a Socialist orientation [Ref. 63].

Cuban and Soviet perceptions had merged once again. We were treated to the spectacle of such dubious scholars as El Salvador's PCES leader, Shafik Jorge Handel, writing in prominent Soviet periodicals such as Kommunist (the theoretical organ of the Soviet Communist Party) that the Salvadorian revolution "will be victorious by the armed road... there is no other way." [Ref. 64]

The revitalized revolutionary strategy pursued in Nicaragua has since found its way to El Salvador, Guatamala, and Honduras. Splintered insurgent groups band together under pressure from Havana. These artificial "broad coalitions" then come under increased control of Cuban military direction, the principal instrument for this direction being the Americas Department of the Cuban Communist Party. Although revolutionary unrest in all of these troubled Central American countries has its indigenous causes, Cuba constitutes the principal external cause of revolutionary violence and instability in the Basin as it exploits new opportunities.

The Cuban military's ground forces are as impressive in number as its Air Force and Navy. Its total armed forces stand at 153,000 troops, 190,000 reserves, 500,000 militia, with approximately 2,400 Soviet military advisors in Cuba to provide training and technical assistance, in addition to the Soviet 3,000-man brigade. Cuba has a significant expeditionary force which (as of 1983) was estimated to be about 40,000 troops [Ref. 65]. In a Rand Corporation study by Edward Gonzales, we read:

Cuba's institutional outreach in support of revolutionary movements and regimes in the Caribbean Basin has been further enhanced by the professionalization of the FAR, and the creation of the Special Troops Battalion in the Ministry of Interior (MINIT). The FAR has an estimated 2,000 military advisors in Nicaragua...as of 1983.\* The Special Troops Battalion within MINIT is under Fidel Castro's personal command. It serves as an all-purpose elite force capable of being dispatched abroad in a crisis situation....The Special Troops Battalion could also be used to back a pro-Cuba faction in an internal power struggle in a friendly Basin country. [Ref. 66]

The logistics capability to move regular or special forces has increased substantially since 1975. The Cuban Air Force's logistics arm consists of IL-62 jet transports, TU-154 medium range transports, and the versatile AN-26 short-medium range tactical transport, each capable of carrying 40 fully-equipped airborne troops on a combat radius

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\*This number differs with earlier statistics of 3,000 Cuban advisors in Nicaragua. The number varies considerably from source to source. [Author's note.]

of 600 nautical miles. This places all of the Caribbean within range of air-dropped troops, if Nicaraguan airfields are utilized for refueling. The larger TU-154 and IL-62 can carry between 150 to 200 combat-equipped troops. In 1982, Cuba received two Soviet built POLNOCHNY-class amphibious assault ships, adding an interesting sealift assault capability to the Cuban military.

The U.S. and East Caribbean Forces' intervention in Grenada on 26 October 1983 provided the world with a collection of documents which provide damning evidence of Soviet and Cuban military assistance to the New Jewel Movement (NJM), far beyond any conceivable security need the microstate of Grenada may have ever required for its own defense:

Another Soviet objective in the Caribbean Basin is of a military and intelligence nature. Moscow seeks to develop military ties with revolutionary regimes in that region so as to accomplish what Chief of the Soviet General Staff Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov described in a 1983 conversation with his Grenadian counterpart, Major Einstein Louison, as "raising the combat readiness and preparedness" of progressive forces facing a threat from imperialism. Ogarkov specified the conditions favorable to this goal: "Over two decades ago there was only Cuba in Latin America; today there are Nicaragua and Grenada, and a serious battle is going on in El Salvador."  
[Ref. 67]

Documents show that even before formal arms agreements were signed in Havana (October 1980), the Soviets and Cubans had shipped Grenada 1,000 automatic rifles, and Nicaragua

had provided 2,000 uniforms [Ref. 68]. Classified arms agreements between the Soviets and the NJM were signed in 1980, and Cuba acted as an intermediary for most deliveries [Ref. 69]. Weapons and ammunition were sent almost exclusively through Cuba, with Soviet seaborne deliveries made to Cuban ports, and transferred to Cuban vessels for final delivery to Grenada [Ref. 70]. A protocol to a 27 October 1981 Grenada/U.S.S.R. agreement on arms deliveries (9 February 1981) provided for the delivery of eight armored personnel carriers, two armored reconnaissance and patrol vehicles, 1,000 submachineguns, ammunition, engineering, and communications equipment [Ref. 71]. This agreement also called for the delivery of 12,000 complete uniforms.

Yet another agreement between the U.S.S.R and NJM, signed in Moscow on 27 July 1982, called for the delivery between 1982-85 of 50 armored personnel carriers, mortars, antitank rocket launchers, antitank launchers, submachineguns, and communications equipment [Ref. 72]. This same agreement provided for the training of Grenadian military personnel at Soviet military schools in the Soviet Union, as well as Soviet advisors traveling to Grenada to provide local training and assistance. Grenadian officers were sent for military training in the Soviet Union in 1982, and more were projected to be sent in 1983.

In another classified "top secret" document discovered by U.S. Forces, was an agreement between the NJM and its

patron for the delivery of 5.4 million rubles worth of "special and other equipment" over the period 1983-1986. Included in this agreement were to be deliveries of two patrol gunboats, an additional 3,000 uniforms, and 12,000 rounds of ammunition [Ref. 73].

The captured documents also show official agreements between Castro and the NJM. Cuba provided training scholarships for Grenadian military personnel and Cuban military advisors operating within the Grenadian Ministry of Defense [Ref. 74]. The workforce constructing the Point Salines runway and airport facility were primarily Cuban, with Soviet assistance.

The degree of involvement in Grenada by Communist nations was as complex as it was widespread. Although not mentioned often in the Grenada Documents, East Germany is considered by U.S. intelligence analysts to have been "the most heavily involved of the Soviet bloc countries." The documents showed the East Germans involved in "party, trade union, and youth organizations, and providing equipment for security forces." [Ref. 75] The East Germans also aided in modernizing the Grenadian telephone system, and provided training (in East Germany) for Grenadians in farm machinery, radio, and telecommunications equipment [Ref. 76]. The documents found on Grenada also include arms agreements between the NJM and North Korea, Bulgaria, and Vietnam.



## V. THE NICARAGUAN THREAT

Nicaragua has had a long and sad history of unrest and oppression. The most recently deposed oppressors of the Somoza dynasty "came to embody the essence of imperial power, scheming, corruption, buying, selling, terrorizing, and looting." [Ref. 77] Their violent overthrow seemed as inevitable as that of the countless other Latin American tyrants who have dominated the political landscape in the last one hundred years. Sadly, Somoza and his followers have been replaced by a Leninist regime, no less odious in its violation of human rights, its denial of civil liberties, and its application of violence as the cure-all of its political ills. What marks the Sandinista regime as infinitely more dangerous than the Somoza dictatorship it deposed, not only to its neighbors, but to the United States as well, is its campaign to support leftist insurgency throughout the region. Coupled with its geographic potential to become yet another Soviet military haven in the Caribbean Basin, the Sandinista's support of insurgencies (at the direction of Moscow and Havana) creates a unique and critical national security concern for the United States.

Although this work does not address in detail the character or makeup of the politics it discusses, in dealing with Nicaragua, it would be remiss not to comment briefly on the broken promises of the Commandantes. On 12 July 1979, the

Sandinista junta made solemn commitments to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), promising to: establish full respect for human rights, to enforce civil justice in Nicaragua, and to create free elections [Ref. 78]. Signed by Commandante Daniel Ortega, the document has proven to be the first, in a sadly long list, of deceits by the ruling leftist elite.

In regard to human rights, the treatment of the Miskito Indians in Nicaragua has come tragically close to crossing the line into the dark world of genocide. Miskitos have been forcibly relocated from traditional villages--those resisting being killed by government forces [Ref. 79]. Senator Edward Kennedy (hardly a friend of the current U.S. administration or its policy in Central America) was compelled to write:

The Sandinista's treatment of the Indians continues to be unconscionable. One-third to one-half of the 90,000 Indians on the coast have been displaced. Some 20,000 have fled to Honduras to escape the Sandinista's scorched-earth policy--the razing of villages along the Rio Coco....Most disturbing of all, 3,000 to 5,000 have lived for two years in intolerable conditions in forced labor camps which resemble concentration camps. [Ref. 80]

Civil rights appear to be no more a priority for the Sandinistas than they were for Somoza. The recent elections in Nicaragua were a sham; the opposition allowed only the barest pretense of freedom to campaign against Ortega. Arturo J. Cruz, a Nicaraguan revolutionary himself, and formerly a member of the ruling junta, wrote of the elections:

The provisional junta, formed in exile, assured the Organization of American States in writing that it would guarantee its citizens universal suffrage. However, as soon as the new government was installed in Managua, the Marxist-Leninist Sandinista vanguard began to concentrate power strictly in its own hands. [Ref. 81]

Cruz goes on to quote the Sandinista Commandante in charge of monitoring Nicaragua's electoral process, Bayardo Arce, as saying that elections were a "bothersome" response to pressure from Washington, and that:

What a revolution needs is the power to enforce. This power to enforce is precisely what constitutes the defense of the dictatorship of the proletariat--the ability of the class to impose its will using instruments at hand, without going into formal or bourgeois details. [Ref. 82]

The evidence would indicate that the electoral process, human rights, and civil liberties are just that to the Sandinistas: "bourgeois details." The regime's brutal treatment of the Miskito Indians, the creation of Cuban-like watchdog "Neighborhood Committees for the Defense of the Revolution" to spy and inform upon the citizenry, and the harassment of the country's only independent news organ, La Prensa, are all clear signposts indicating the aggressively brutal nature of this newest Soviet client-state. [Ref. 83]

#### A. THE NICARAGUAN THREAT: STRATEGIC

Nicaragua, like Cuba, poses a dual threat to the United States. In a strategic sense, Nicaragua is well-placed in the region to provide logistical support for Soviet air and

naval assets operating in the Caribbean in peacetime. Nicaragua is unique in its ability to provide naval facilities on both the Pacific and Atlantic shores. Therefore, the threat potential of a hostile, Moscow-aligning Sandinista government to U.S. strategic security is considerable, and very similar to the Cuban threat:

Complicating matters, Soviet influence in Nicaragua raises the question of the potential military utility of Nicaragua to the U.S.S.R. in interdiction scenarios....others fear that the Sandinistas' Soviet orientation, together with the recent expansion of airfields and upgrading of ports, add up to a greatly enhanced Soviet ability to imperil U.S. security.  
[Ref. 84]

The runway under construction at Punta Huete, north of Managua, is over 3,200 meters in length, and will accommodate any Soviet-built fighter or attack aircraft. The airfield includes dual runways and taxiways, as well as at least eight military aircraft revetments [Ref. 85].

In the first days of November 1984, the world community watched a minor replay of the Cuban Missile Crisis as the United States announced its suspicion that Soviet-built MIG-21 aircraft (aboard the Soviet freighter Bakuriani) appeared to be destined for Corinto, in Nicaragua. U.S. administration officials had strongly hinted in the past that delivery of tactical jet aircraft to Nicaragua would be met with "action" of some kind. The Bakuriani's cargo turned out to be a false alarm, but not before a significant amount of political opinion surfaced. Analyzing the mini-crisis, shortly after the fact, Drew Middleton wrote:



Reports that the MIG-21's would soon reinforce the Nicaraguan Air Force excited American apprehension. This was not because the MIG-21 is an advanced aircraft...but because it is far superior to anything in that country's inventory at present, or in the inventories of any of Nicaragua's neighbors. "In European warfare, forget the MIG-21," an Air Force officer said recently, "but down there it would dominate the air battlefield." [Ref. 86]

Middleton went on to report that of equal seriousness to the potential MIG deliveries was the actual delivery of Soviet frontline combat helicopters which "enhance the striking power of Nicaragua's ground forces." [Ref. 87]

During the crisis, some of the most vocal critics of Reagan administration policy in Central America suddenly shifted gears on their position vis-a-vis Nicaragua. Senator Christopher J. Dodd (Democrat of Connecticut), and Senator Jim Sasser (Democrat of Tennessee) did not rule out the use of U.S. military force to deal with Soviet jet aircraft delivered to Nicaragua [Ref. 88]. The administration compared the MIG incident to the Soviet arms buildup in Cuba prior to the Missile Crisis of 1962, and Michael Barrett, Defense Department spokesman, said that the accumulation of arms in Nicaragua exceeded any defensive needs. "We just don't feel that Nicaragua wants to be a peaceful neighbor." [Ref. 89]

If the Nicaraguans were to obtain tactical jet aircraft such as the MIG-21 or MIG-23, or more likely, were to allow Cuban Air Force assets to operate from Nicaraguan airfields, they would be in a position to strike at Mexico, the southern United States, and Panama. The Panama Canal remains an



important factor in NATO war plans for access and rapid transfer of amphibious forces and warships between Atlantic and Pacific oceans, as well as for trade and movement of raw materials.

Joseph Cirincione and Leslie Hunter have examined this potential threat Nicaragua poses as a support site for the Soviet Navy [Ref. 90]. They see the advantage to the Soviet Union of a Pacific port in Nicaragua in the context of the numerous alternate shipping routes that may be employed by the United States to avoid interdiction operations by Soviet forces. Some of these routes, they assert, would pass by, or near, the West Coast of Central America. As an example, U.S.-bound oil tankers might head eastward from the Persian Gulf to the U.S. West Coast to circumvent a possible Soviet attack from submarines operating from support facilities near East Africa. A Soviet facility in Western Nicaragua, they argue, could expose them to attack as they neared their destination. Alternately, a westward route from the Persian Gulf, around the Cape of Good Hope, across the tip of, and up the western reaches of, South America could render U.S.-bound tankers even more vulnerable to Soviet SSN's and/or SSGN's operating from Nicaraguan bases. Such a Nicaraguan naval facility would seriously threaten U.S. or NATO shipping, and serve as an augment to the Soviet Navy's already considerable operational flexibility in the region, presently provided by Cuba.

Referring to Admiral Harry D. Train, II, Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic, and his testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives [Ref. 91], Cirincione and Hunter cite the CinC's report, i.e., the Soviet Union may begin stationing some of their DELTA-class nuclear ballistic missile submarines in the South Atlantic--possibly in the ocean area between Brazil and Africa. Some form of a forward deployment base would be required, and according to the (then) Atlantic Commander, it would likely be in West Africa, complete with requisite support ships. This might include frontline Soviet combatants. "If they do that," Train went on, "that forward deployed fleet will be squarely astride these vital sealanes through the South Atlantic ." [Ref. 92] Taken in light of the already considerable Soviet naval presence in the Caribbean, operating from Cuba, can the United States tolerate yet another basing facility to spring up on the East and West Coasts of Nicaragua, further contributing to this disturbing Soviet naval synergy?

Nicaraguan airfields would add to the above effect by providing the Soviets even greater strategic and maritime reconnaissance capabilities against U.S. and NATO naval forces in the Caribbean, as well as up and down the East and West Coasts of the United States.

#### B. THE NICARAGUAN THREAT: REGIONAL

In less than five years, the Sandinistas have built the largest and most modernly equipped military force in Central

America. No other country in the region can even begin to match the Nicaraguan military machine in firepower or mobility. Table V compares the conventional military forces of Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador to illustrate this disequilibrium. In 1984, deliveries of tanks and armored personnel carriers (APC's) on Bulgarian ships have more than doubled the size of Nicaragua's tanks and mechanized forces since May 1983. [Ref. 93]

By contrast, Honduras has 16 approved reconnaissance vehicles. These are not amphibious and cannot carry personnel other than crew members. Costa Rica has no army, much less any tanks, and El Salvador, while having a few dozen armored personnel carriers does not have tanks. [Ref. 94]

Aside from offensive weaponry such as tanks and artillery, Nicaragua has greatly increased its collection of logistical support military vehicles:

During the first six months of 1984, the U.S. Government noted the arrival in Nicaragua of over 200 military trucks, about 300 jeeps, plus smaller numbers of other vehicles and spare parts. In 1983, Nicaragua received nearly 500 trucks, over 500 jeeps, and about 100 other vehicles. East Germany alone has provided more than 1,000 trucks since 1980. The Soviets have supplied at least six heavy ferries to give additional amphibious mobility to the Nicaraguan armed forces. With these ferries, the nonamphibious tanks could be taken across rivers or other bodies of water. [Ref. 95]

The 7,500 to 9,000 soldiers in Somoza's National Guard have been replaced by a standing army of 61,800, with 12,000 reserves. This is twice the size of any other Central American Army. In addition, there exists a 40,000 male and female popular militia. [Ref. 96] Nicaragua has an offensive

TABLE V

COMPARISON OF CENTRAL AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES

	Nicaragua	Honduras	El Salvador
Total under arms	61,800	17,200	41,650
Army (Armor and Artillery)	60 T54/T55 (MBT) 3 M-4A3 20 PT-76 Lt Tks 20 BRDM-2 20 Staghound armed car 80 BTR-40/-60/-152 APC 30 M-1942 76mm guns 12 105mm 24 M-1938 122mm 12 D-30 How 12 D-20 How 12 BM-21 122mm 24 120mm Mort SPG-9 73mm 48 ZIS-2 57mm AA	16 Scorpion Lt Tks 12 RBY MKI Recce 24 M-102, 105mm 30 120mm Mort M-116 75mm M-1 81mm	12 AMX-13 Lt Tks 18 AML-90 Armcd car 10 M-113 20 UR-416 APC 6 M-56 105mm 6-M-114 155mm 81mm mort 8 UB-M52 122mm mort M-18 57mm M-20 75mm LAW
Air Force (Aircraft and anti-air weapons)	3 T-33A 3 T-28D 6 SF-260 4 C-47 1 Falcon 20 10 MI-8 Helo 2 OH-6A Helo 2 Alouette III Helo 138 ZPU-4 AA ZU-23 AA 6 M-1939 AA M-1950 AA 700 SA-7 SAM	12 Super Mystere B2 4 F-86E 10 A-37B 10 C-47 4 Cessna 10 UH-1H Helo (on loan) 5 UH-1B	11 Ouragan 18 Super Mystere B2 7 Magister 17 A-37 6 O-2 Recce 5 C-47 2 DC-6 L/70 40mm AA M-55 (Yugo-slavian AA)
Navy	4 DABUR-class patrol craft 1 LCM 8-10 other patrol	9 SWIFTSHIPS patrol craft 9 other patrol craft	3 CAMCRAFT patrol craft 3 other patrol craft

Source: Compiled from data in: "Nicaragua's Military Build-up and Support for Central American Subversion," Department of State, Department of Defense, Washington, July 1984; and The Military Balance: 1984-1985, IISS, London, 1984.



capacity based on its arsenal of 60 Soviet-built T-54 and T-55 tanks, 80 BTR armored personnel carriers, 105mm and 152mm howitzers, and MI-8 attack helicopters. The thin guarantee of good intentions in regard to these offensive weapons is not altogether convincing. As one Nicaraguan military leader put it: "We are not a war machine. We have tanks, possibly more than Honduras. But this is not the most important thing. It doesn't mean we have bad intentions." [Ref. 97]

Nicaragua's neighbors remain unconvinced, causing a Central American arms race. Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala are making large arms purchases to counter the Nicaraguan threat. Even Costa Rica, which has no army, is expending funds to enlarge its security forces. There already exists a de facto state of war between Nicaragua and her neighbors in regard to borders. The handwriting is on the wall, foretelling future Nicaraguan aggression against its neighbors.

Honduras has claimed 33 border violations and violent acts by the Sandinistas in the period from January 30 to August 20, 1982. Honduran violators are also cited by Nicaraguan leaders who talk about "a real state of war" along the borders of Honduras.... Both sides have increased their military presence along the borders. [Ref. 98]

By threatening other Central American neighbors, Nicaragua fuels an arms race, creates instability, and diverts the time, effort, energy, and most importantly, the economic means of these countries from their pressing and critical domestic ills.



The instability thus created places at risk U.S. efforts to aid the region economically and maintain a secure American backyard.

The Nicaraguan support for insurgency in Central America, specifically and most importantly in El Salvador (but also in Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica) is the most serious of the present-day threats to U.S. security interests in the Caribbean Basin. Arms shipments through Nicaragua to Salvadoran guerrillas increased dramatically in June 1980 [Ref. 99]. The supply network between Nicaragua and El Salvador follows a variety of routes, routinely using Honduran territory for land routes, as well as alternate sea and air conduits. Former El Salvadoran guerrilla leaders have testified that in 1981 and 1982, Salvadoran insurgents received nearly all of their arms from Nicaragua. They received monthly shipments via the overland route through Honduras, by truck [Ref. 100].

By sea, vessels disguised as fishing boats leave from Nicaragua's northwestern coast, and then transfer their arms shipments to motorized canoes which enter the inlets and bays of El Salvador. In September 1983, two Nicaraguan trans-shipment points (La Concha in Estero de Padre Ramos, and Potosi on the Gulf of Fonseca) were attacked by anti-Sandinista forces. Western reporters who visited La Concha after the attack found a radio-equipped warehouse and boat facility disguised as a fishing cooperative. Local fishermen were

reported to have seen wooden crates being unloaded from military vehicles and placed into motor launches. The reporters also noted that the site at La Concha was littered with empty ammunition boxes. [Ref. 101]

Arms continue to be shipped to El Salvador from points in Nicaragua across the Gulf de Fonseca. The Salvadoran and Honduran Governments have had intermittent success in stemming the flow of weapons into their respective countries from Nicaragua. The U.S. Departments of State and Defense report:

A dramatic interdiction occurred in January 1981, when a refrigerated trailer-truck from Nicaragua, passing through Honduras on its way to El Salvador, was found to be carrying more than 100 M-16 rifles, and thousands of rounds of ammunition, including rocket and mortar shells, in its hollow roof. The guerrillas are using a combination of automobiles, small vans, trucks, mules, and people with backpacks for transporting arms overland. A group of Salvadoran guerrillas were caught by Honduran authorities in March 1983 with arms and a map tracing a route from Nicaragua through Honduras to El Salvador. Also, the Hondurans have succeeded in locating safehouses and breaking up some groups, including Honduran and Salvadoran guerrillas. [Ref. 102]

American reporters in Nicaragua in April 1984, interviewing Western European and Latin American diplomats, were told that the Sandinistas were continuing to send military equipment to El Salvadoran guerrillas, and to operate training camps for these guerrillas inside Nicaragua [Ref. 103].

In mid-1980, Salvadoran Communist Party Chairman Handel led a guerrilla delegation which visited Cuba, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria and Ethiopia. The purpose of the Handel delegation was to obtain arms for

the Salvadoran insurgent movement, and in this aim, the group was highly successful. Soviet officials helped to arrange for shipment of arms, some of which were of U.S. origin, captured in Vietnam. The route of these arms shipments was through the Soviet Union's two Caribbean Basin client-states. Weapons first arrived in Cuba for subsequent transfer to El Salvador via the described transfer system originating in Nicaragua. This U.S.S.R./Cuba/Nicaragua transfer arrangement has been in operation since the Sandinista takeover in 1979 [Ref. 104]. In the words of a former Salvadoran guerrilla leader: "the majority of arms was given by Vietnam-- American M-16's. The arms came from Vietnam to Havana; Havana to Managua; Managua to El Salvador." [Ref. 105]

In a Washington Post article in 1983, the Nicaraguan involvement in Honduras was described in detail. Honduran officials had been alerted to the attempt at establishing a guerrilla force in Honduras, originating from Nicaragua. Honduran guerrilla defectors told of the plan to establish this force, and also of their guerrilla training in Cuba and Nicaragua. Their return to Honduras was via a safehouse in Managua prior to their infiltration back over the Honduran border. The defectors alleged that their group was the advance team of a yet larger group to follow from Nicaragua, to be supplied via air-drops from Nicaragua. [Ref. 106] The incursion of these Nicaraguan-backed insurgents has no doubt been a major motivation in the Honduran

Government's recent attempt to seek increased military aid from the United States. On 29 November 1984, Honduran officials met with Secretary of State George P. Schultz, Defense Secretary Casper W. Weinberger, and other key U.S. administration figures to discuss increased U.S. security assistance to Honduras, as well as the establishment of a permanent U.S. base there [Ref. 107].

Costa Rica, which had been pro-Sandinista in the early stages of that regime's existence, is also threatened by Nicaraguan-backed insurgency leading the Costa Rican President Luis Alberto Mongie to comment on the threat from Nicaragua: "I never thought I would say, as I do now, that we would have it worse in four years [of Sandinismo] than in 40 years of Somoza." [Ref. 108] Since 1981, Costa Rica has experienced sporadic terrorist acts including bombing and kidnapping. Aside from violence directed against Costa Rica, the Sandinistas have attempted to use Costa Rica as the site of assassination attempts against their political opponents. In June 1983, two Nicaraguan officials entered Costa Rica to meet with Nicaraguan opposition leaders Eden Pastora and Alfonso Robelo of the exiled Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE). The Nicaraguan officials, under the guise of defectors, attempted to assassinate the ARDE leaders by use of a bomb hidden in an attache case. The plot and the assassins were foiled when the time-bomb exploded prematurely, killing one Nicaraguan assassin and wounding the others [Ref. 109].



## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Security problems and challenges for the United States, created by the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Nicaragua, illuminate one fundamental fact: first and foremost, the problem is an East-West issue. This most recent "battleground" happens to be taking place in the Caribbean Basin, prompting many to seize upon the notion that the U.S. is enmeshed in a classic North-South struggle. That is true only in a secondary sense. The Soviet Union has sought to extend and export its influence in the Western Hemisphere by taking advantage of the economic strife and endemic political instability of the region, not to mention a long held anti-American sentiment. They have succeeded admirably in their goal. A militarized Cuba has been a fait accompli for over two decades; the Sandinistas have been following suit at a breakneck pace for the past five years; and Grenada, with its New Jewel Movement, was a showpiece expansion of Creole-Leninism.

The purpose of this paper has not been merely to catalog the myriad threats (strategic and regional) posed by Cuba and Nicaragua working in conjunction with the Soviets. Rather, the information contained herein should serve as a bedrock upon which to construct the critical question concerning the events at work in this troubled region: Has the time come for the United States to shun its self-consciousness concerning the implementation of the Monroe



Doctrine? This study in no way argues for the abandonment of significant and long-term economic aid for the Central American and Caribbean states. This is a critical element of the U.S. security structure in the region. [Ref. 110] However, economic aid is not sufficient to the task of re-establishing the Caribbean Basin as a sphere of unquestioned U.S. security dominance. The Soviet Union has sought to find holes in the Monroe Doctrine for decades, as was clearly articulated in Nikita Khrushchev's memoirs. The U.S. cannot apply an effective economic program in the presence of radicalized Soviet clients. Nor can providing Caribbean states with richly deserved economic assistance for human development be accomplished while Soviet client-states actively foment leftist insurgencies throughout the region.

Defense Secretary Weinberger, speaking on the NBC news program "Meet the Press" on 11 November 1984, echoed the Reagan administration's slow but sure ideological reembracing of the Monroe Doctrine:

We shouldn't forget that the United States' policy for many decades has been governed by the Monroe Doctrine (and its emphasis) on the importance of noninterference by other hemispheres into the affairs of the Western Hemisphere. [Ref. 111]

The Weinberger statement is a result of the incontrovertable evidence of Soviet-sponsored aggression in the Caribbean Basin. Ironically, the Monroe Doctrine, proclaimed in 1823, was an effort to curb Russian moves to colonize the northwest coast of North America, as well as to thwart other European

powers from filling the void created by the departure of Spanish influence in Latin America. President Monroe's view on outside interference was unequivocal: "We should consider any attempt on their [the Europeans] part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." [Ref. 112] Can anyone reasonably argue that the Soviet-sponsored Nicaraguan and Cuban support of insurgency in El Salvador (and other Central American states outlined earlier in this work) is not a threat to U.S. security? Can any reasonable argument be made that the basing facilities provided by Cuba for Soviet naval and air assets does not offer a serious threat to the Caribbean SLOC's, and therefore directly challenge U.S. security?

The reluctance in embracing the Monroe Doctrine stems from the checkered history of U.S. military intervention in the region: The Spanish American War (1898), Theodore Roosevelt's securing the right to construct the Panama Canal (1903), establishment of a protectorate over Cuba (1903), interventions in the Dominican Republic (1905, 1912, 1916-24, 1965-66), Nicaragua (1909, 1912-25, 1926-33), Haiti (1915-34), and Mexico (1914, 1916). All are examples of U.S. political-military policy which opponents to the Monroe Doctrine list as a dark and shameful history, not to be repeated. Military intervention is a last resort for policy-makers--or should be. Yet, when does the threat to U.S. security interests become intolerable? The threat of

international communism led to a collective security instrument, the Declaration of Caracas in 1954, and led President Eisenhower (certainly no stranger to the horrors of modern warfare) to intervene militarily against Arbenz in Guatemala that same year. Those who completely dismiss military intervention as a policy option have the misguided perception that by refraining from such actions, the U.S. assures itself lasting admiration in the court of world opinion. This is a delusion. The United States accomplishes one thing, and one thing only, when it tolerates aggression: it signals to the aggressor--"proceed at will."

John Norton Moore, Professor of International Law at the University of Virginia, is assisting the U.S. State Department in its defense of the United States in the World Court against the Nicaraguan lawsuit over CIA-sponsored mining activities. Moore stated that it was "absolutely clear" that the United States had a legal right to use military force against Nicaragua. Moore said: "We have an ongoing armed attack directed by Nicaragua against El Salvador." This brings into play, he argued, the right of "collective self-defense," recognized by the United Nation's Charter and the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance of 1947 (known to many as the Rio Treaty). He further stated that the Monroe Doctrine was "very fundamental" to the dispute, because it represented the United States' "dim view of nations seeking to impose by force of arms, their kinds

of political systems on nations in this hemisphere."

[Ref. 113]

Cuba was a major setback for maintaining U.S. security in the region, and with the exception of the action in the Dominican Republic in 1965, the Monroe Doctrine has been a dormant policy. Dormant, that is, until October 1983, when the U.S. and East Caribbean Forces intervened in Grenada. Grenada, and its Leninist New Jewel Movement, was important to the Soviets for a variety of reasons. So, too, was its loss. Dov Zakheim, Assistant Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and Resources, argues:

Grenada was thus a useful asset to the Soviet Union, and consequently its loss must have been viewed by Soviet policymakers as a blow to efforts aimed at the expansion of its foothold in the Western Hemisphere. The invasion also resulted in several blows to the "progressive forces" of the region. Most noticeable in this regard were the expulsion of Cuban advisors from Suriname, and Castro's admission of his inability to come to the aid of revolutionary regimes in Latin America and the Caribbean. [Ref. 114]

Has the United States recovered from its "Vietnam Syndrome" as both Soviet and U.S. political analysts insist? The answer lies in the future policy of the United States in the Caribbean Basin. The threat is serious; the need to demonstrate to the Soviets a firm resolve in dealing with that threat is paramount.



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