

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

92

~~SECRET-SENSITIVE~~  
~~Eyes Only~~

WASHINGTON

Saturday - 12:30 pm - October 14, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: "Che" Guevara

*J*

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

The death of "Che" and Debray's dramatic public reversal of plea from innocent to guilty in the court case represents a serious blow to Castro. Both his leading guerrilla fighter and guerrilla theoretician have fallen in Bolivia. We do not know how he will react. Against the possibility that he might try to recoup lost prestige by some dramatic act against United States interests in Latin America -- such as bombing of one of our Embassies or kidnapping of diplomatic personnel -- we have instructed our missions to be on the alert and take necessary precautions.

*W. Rostow*

SEARCHED  
S. O. 10016, CH. 246  
INDEXED 9/32  
BY *[Signature]* FILED 1-7-93

Attachment

[Redacted]

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**173. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson/1/**

Washington, October 14, 1967, 12:30 p.m.

/1/ Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Bolivia, Vol. IV, Memoranda, January 1966-December 1968. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. The memorandum indicates Johnson saw it.

SUBJECT

"Che" Guevara

Attached is a memorandum from Dick Helms describing the detention and execution of "Che" Guevara./2/

/2/ Document 172.

CIA has also obtained *[less than 1 line of source text not declassified]* messages sent from Havana to "Che" in January and February 1967 showing that the Bolivian guerrilla movement was a Cuban show designed to spark a movement of "continental magnitude"./3/ Several high ranking members of the Bolivian Communist Party were called to Havana to convince them that it would be an error to present the Bolivian operation as a national movement. These messages also indicate that the French pro-Castro communist theoretician Jules Debray was sent to Bolivia to contact "Che" Guevara in late February. He was arrested in March.

/3/ According to information provided to the CIA, Che Guevara stated that the ultimate purpose of the insurgency in Bolivia was to "create a Viet Nam out of South America." (*[telegram number not declassified]* Central Intelligence Agency, DDO/IMS Files, *[file name not declassified]*)

*[less than 1 line of source text not declassified]* we gather that Cuban officials accept the fact that "Che" is dead and may be trying to recover the body. The communist-leaning President of the Chilean Senate, Salvador Allende, has sent a message to President Barrientos asking for the remains. This request, and one by the family-"Che's" brother went to Bolivia to claim the body-probably led Barrientos to make the announcement that "Che" had been cremated. The Bolivians do not want an independent autopsy to show that they executed "Che" and they are intent on not permitting the remains to be exploited by the communist movement.

The death of "Che" and Debray's dramatic public reversal of plea from innocent to guilty in the court case represents a serious blow to Castro. Both his leading guerrilla fighter and guerrilla theoretician have fallen in Bolivia. We do not know how he will react. Against the possibility that he might try to recoup lost prestige by some dramatic act against United States interests in Latin America-such as bombing of one of our Embassies or kidnapping of diplomatic personnel-we have instructed our missions to be on the alert and take necessary precautions./4/

/4/ This instruction was transmitted in telegram 54210 to all ARA posts, October 14; it also instructed the posts to refrain from any statements in which the United States takes credit for defeat of the Cuban-led insurgency in Bolivia. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 6 CUBA) In an October 10 memorandum Broe wrote that the defeat of the guerrillas and killing of Che Guevara in Higuera "not only wiped out the guerrillas active in Bolivia, but also probably uprooted a Cuban-directed guerrilla network which was destined to spread throughout Latin America." (Broe to the Deputy Director for Plans, October 10; Central Intelligence Agency, Job 88-01415R, DDO/IMS Files, *[file name not declassified]*) The CIA prepared a report on Cuban Subversive Policy and the Bolivian Guerrilla Episode, May 1968, that was forwarded to President Johnson on June 11, 1968, with the following comment by Helms: "This detailed study gives an insight into the doggedness with which Communist Cuba pursues its revolutionary aims in Latin America." (Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Cuba, Vol. IV, Bowdler File, 1965-1968)

Walt