

Secret conference in London maps Caribbean 'security' strategy

British, Canadian and U.S. officials met in London last week under a veil of secrecy to map a Caribbean "security" strategy to isolate Cuba and "prevent the outflanking of NATO in Latin America," according to information received by *Executive Intelligence Review*. Blacked out of the Western press, the talks are "continuing," according to a brief statement released by the State Department Oct. 19. Two earlier rounds were held in Washington last May and June. The State Department's admission came after two days' refusal to comment on the hush-hush talks.

Discussion at the London meeting—whose sponsor is yet unknown—centered on the following points, report sources close to the talks.

(1) Cuba has established significant influence in the Caribbean area as a result of its leadership role in the Non-aligned Movement.

(2) Increasing ties between OPEC nations and Third World non-oil-producing countries, following the Havana Non-aligned Conference, represent a threat to NATO.

(3) International Monetary Fund and World Bank lending "conditionalities" must be strengthened as a lever of political coercion.

(4) Britain must assume primary responsibility for the British Caribbean, that is, its former colonies and members of the Commonwealth.

(5) Jamaica, Guyana, and Grenada are "problem countries" in the region, because of their opposition to IMF conditionalities and their diplomatic relations with and support of Cuba, particularly in Third World forums. While Grenada and Guyana can be forced to change policies without changing governments, Jamaica represents a "different case."

Although a list of attendees is not available, it is known that two high-ranking U.S. State Department officials were present in London: senior diplomatic troubleshooter Philip Habib, and deputy-undersecretary for Central American-Caribbean affairs, Brandon Grove. Grove was formerly a European desk officer at the State Department. Habib, undersecretary of state

for political affairs under Henry Kissinger, toured the Caribbean area in late August to assess the extent of opposition to the United States and to pressure area governments into backing a cold war campaign against Cuba.

British brains, U.S. brawn

While Canadian and U.S. officials deny that the trilateral talks have any connection to the Carter administration's decision to increase military activity in the region, no doubt U.S. policy is being shaped in these meetings. Caribbean sources characterize the situation as a replay of the old 19th and early 20th century "special relationship" between the United States and Britain based on "British brains and American brawn." The London talks occurred almost simultaneously with the high profile land-sea exercises at Guantanamo Bay. The meeting was addressed by Sir Neil Cameron, head of Britain's combined military forces who has a reputation as an anti-detente spokesman and advocate of the "China Card" against the Soviet Union. Britain and Canada are behind the proposal to create a regional "naval patrol"—using the Coast Guard forces of "friendly nations" in the Caribbean—training for which is beginning in Barbados along the outlines of a British-drafted security plan. This would be a complement to the Joint Caribbean Joint Task force set up in Florida by the United States after Carter's Oct. 1 "Cuba crisis" national address.

Two Step Strategy

This is one facet of a "two-step" strategy to reassert American—NATO—control over the region as outlined in Jimmy Carter's special Presidential Directive 52 that orders an effort to isolate Cuba and undercut its growing influence in the Third World. While displaying U.S. capability, and readiness, to deploy militarily against any perceived "security threat," Washington is scrambling to put together a "democratic" alternative to Cuba's "radical" influence in Latin America. As the United States learned in Nicaragua, military interven-

tionism will, at this point, only feed the growing anti-American, anti-IMF "rebellion" and could provoke a serious backlash in relations with Europe as well.

U.S. promotion of "democratic change" is seen, however, only a temporary tactic to establish the measure of control and credibility needed to move militarily against any country or political force that backs Washington's policies ... in the name of "defending democracy."

The ongoing General Assembly of the Organization of American States, meeting in La Paz, Bolivia, is the scene of American diplomacy to create a "moderate democratic" counterweight to Cuba around the five-nation Andean Pact. The U.S. delegation, led by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, is trying to convince the Andean countries to issue a "set of economic and political principles that would stand in contrast to the so-called Havana Declaration of Nonaligned Countries. The Havana Declaration attacked the IMF conditionalities, demanded creation of a new monetary system, and posed advanced sector intensive aid to Third World industrial development as the only remedy for world recession.

Vance is also trying, according to the Washington Star report, to sell the Andean pact countries on "Washington's conviction that the former colonial powers in the Caribbean, Britain, and France, joined by such countries as Canada and Japan, should play an active role in providing coordinated technological and economic assistance to the mini-states of the area."

The paradigm for Washington's "democratic" tactic, is last week's "moderate, centrist" military coup in El Salvador, a coup run largely through Venezuelan-allied Christian Democratic and Jesuit networks. Washington supported and encouraged the coup against repressive dictator Gen. Romero in order to preempt another popular revolution on the order of Nicaragua. It is expected that the United States will now renew military aid to El Salvador on the grounds that the "human rights" picture has improved.

—Mary Goldstein

State Dept. hand in El Salvador coup

Although State Department official Hodding Carter III firmly denied any role of the United States government in the El Salvador coup last week, evidence is mounting that shows differently.

As early as September, in testimony before the House International Affairs Committee, Viron Vaky, undersecretary of state for Latin America, cited U.S. special interest in Central America due to its "geopolitical proximity." Vaky warned that the feudal-like structures and overwhelming poverty of countries like El Salvador lead to growing polarization and opposition from the population. Since "change is inevitable," Vaky stressed, the United States must promote "peaceful change compatible with individual liberties and democratic values." This was an implicit reference to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's policy that no more "Nicaraguas"—radical, sweeping away of the dominant oligarchical institutions—would be tolerated.

Sources close to the State Department report that Vaky made El Salvador his "number one priority" after the overthrow of Nicaragua's dictator, Anastasio Somoza in July. Both Vaky and William Bowdler, special envoy to Central America, took charge of efforts to secure "peaceful change" in the country, superseding the U.S. ambassador to the country. Flying "in and out" several times in the last three months, Bowdler and Vaky first tried to pressure the now-ousted Romero government to grant token concessions, and later met with Christian Democrats, liberal businessmen, and military officers to form a "moderate" replacement for the Romero regime.

According to as yet unconfirmed reports, the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) delegation to the country, which handles relations with the El Salvador military, was beefed up in the last several months.

One specialist on El Salvador reported that the Carter administration went so far as to lay down "conditions" on the composition of the new junta. Washington emphasized that the military representatives on the junta must come from desk officers, men whose distance from troop command and the army's repressive role would give them some credibility before the population. (That condition was met.)