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## CENTRAL AMERICA

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# EIR report forecasts crisis in Guatemala

Executive Intelligence Review has just issued a 100-page Special Report on "The Worsening Destabilization of Central America." Prepared under the direction of EIR Latin American Editor Dennis Small, the document reviews the role of the Socialist International, the Jesuits, and U.S. Secretary of State Haig in jointly destabilizing the region, and provides a detailed analysis of each of the six countries in the area—Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Belize, El Salvador, and Costa Rica.

The EIR study singles out Guatemala as a particularly dangerous flashpoint, whose stability has been further undermined by the recent granting of independence to the former British colony of Belize. Given its timeliness, we reprint below excerpts taken from the Guatemala section of the EIR Special Report.

Guatemala is the center of gravity for Central America, and its destabilization would be enough to tip the balance throughout the entire region in the direction of chaos and depopulation.

First, it is the largest economy of the six nations by far, with a 1980 GNP of \$4.2 billion . . . Oil is playing an increasingly important role in the Guatemalan economy, with current output of 5,500 bpd expected to rise to 30,000 bpd by 1984. In April 1981 new finds in the Petén region have raised estimates of potential reserves to the 2.5 to 5 billion barrel range . . . Reliable Mexican sources report that it is generally believed that Guatemala's oil deposits form part of a larger formation that includes Mexico's prodigious Reforma and related fields.

Second, Guatemala occupies the central strategic position in the Central American chessboard because it borders on Mexico. . . .

Besides being the key nation in Central America, it is EIR's evaluation that Guatemala is also the most likely one to explode into uncontrolled violence in the immediate period ahead. . . . There are three principal paths which could lead to such an explosion:

1) On Sept. 21, 1981, Belize was granted independence by Great Britain over the protests of Guatemala, which maintains territorial claims on the former British colony. A revanchist right-wing coup in Guatemala is possible in response to this move, as are escalating border incidents between Guatemala and the newly independent

nation.

2) Guatemala is scheduled to hold presidential elections in March 1982. This could easily throw the already highly polarized country—it is often said that Guatemala has no political center whatsoever—into an unmanageable situation of factional warfare.

3) The widespread left-versus-right violence that already plagues the country could become sharply aggravated if the guerrilla forces decide to launch an offensive, or if a "preemptive" right-wing coup—currently under active consideration—prompts the left into such a move. . .

The move [of granting Belize independence] has by no means settled the long-standing territorial dispute involving Guatemala's centuries-old claim to Belize; rather, the step has aggravated tensions. . . . and military preparations have stepped up on both sides. . . .

Under the implemented British plan [for independence], Britain will maintain its 1,600 man defense force and 4 Harrier jets in Belize for an unspecified period of time, to defend the fledgling nation against a possible Guatemalan invasion; and they will retain a large jungle training school in the tiny enclave. Over the past weeks, Britain has moved its military force to the border area, and Guatemala has done the same with its troops. Army Chief of Staff Benedicto Lucas García, the president's brother, told the press: "We are not going to attack; but if the British attack us, we will hit them back; we will answer them in the same way."

Thus, the stage is set for a simple "border incident" to blow up into a full confrontation—as per Britain's classic "decolonization" scenarios.

Also under consideration is direct American involvement in the defense of Belize. The London-based *Latin America Weekly Report* of July 31, 1981 notes: "Some U.S. military presence in Belize would reassure the Guatemalans (and Washington) that Belize would not become a haven for guerrillas, or get itself a left-wing government." The newsweekly went on to explain matter-of-factly that "these developments have not displeased Washington, which would like a better foothold in Belize in case Guatemala falls to the guerrillas."

### THE WORSENING DESTABILIZATION OF CENTRAL AMERICA

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