MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Death of "Che" Guevara

This morning we are about 99% sure that "Che" Guevara is dead. These should arrive in Washington today or tomorrow.

CIA tells us that the latest information is that Guevara was taken alive. After a short interrogation to establish his identity, General Ovando -- Chief of the Bolivian Armed Forces -- ordered him shot. I regard this as stupid, but it is understandable from a Bolivian standpoint, given the problems which the sparing of French communist and Castro courier Regis Debray has caused them.

The death of Guevara carries these significant implications:

-- It marks the passing of another of the aggressive, romantic revolutionaries like Sukarno, Nkrmah, Ben Bella -- and reinforces this trend.

-- In the Latin American context, it will have a strong impact in discouraging would-be guerrillas.

-- It shows the soundness of our "preventive medicine" assistance to countries facing incipient insurgency -- it was the Bolivian 2nd Ranger Battalion, trained by our Green Berets from June-September, that cornered him and got him.

We have put these points across to several newsmen.


Rostow