



Special Report No. 132

United States Department of State

107650

September 1985

“Revolution Beyond Our Borders”

Sandinista Intervention in Central America

“This revolution goes beyond our borders.”

Tomas Borge
July 19, 1981

LIBRARY
USA. COSS FT. LEAVENWORTH, KS

DEC 1 1985

ACCESSION NO. _____
PO REGISTER _____

972.8505

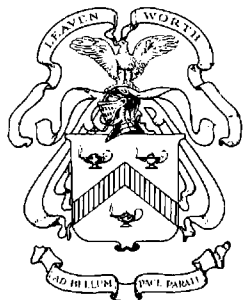
2

R454

C 2

THE COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE

LIBRARY



Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-6900

Call Number _____

CGSC Label 13 85-1627-10,000-14 Jan 85
1 Jan 85 Edition of 11 Dec 72 is obsolete.

“Revolution Beyond Our Borders”

Sandinista Intervention in Central America

CONTENTS

	Page
I. What the Controversy Is About	1
II. The Praxis of Intervention	3
A. El Salvador	5
B. Honduras	13
C. Costa Rica	16
III. The Collective Response	19
IV. Conclusion	31

APPENDICES

1. Glossary	35
2. Chronology	37
3. Former Guerrillas	41
4. Nicaraguans in Exile	43
5. Rifles From Vietnam	46
6. FMLN Evaluation of the 1981 Offensive	47
7. Sources	49

ILLUSTRATIONS

Map of Central America: Major Locations Mentioned in Text	ii
Photograph of Papalonal Airstrip in Nicaragua	8
Map of Central America and the Caribbean	33

CENTRAL AMERICA: MAJOR LOCATIONS MENTIONED IN TEXT



I. What the Controversy Is About

A nation that provides material, logistics support, training, and facilities to insurgent forces fighting against the government of another state is engaged in a use of force legally indistinguishable from conventional military operations by regular armed forces. As with conventional uses of force, such military action is permissible under international law if it is undertaken in the exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense in response to an unlawful use of force.¹ But such action is unlawful when it constitutes unprovoked aggression.

A striking feature of the public debate on the conflict in Central America is the degree to which all parties concerned accept these propositions. As Nicaragua has stated to the World Court:

... There is now a substantially unanimous modern view concerning indirect use of force through armed groups of mercenaries or irregulars. Whatever legal doubts may have existed prior to World War II were dispelled by the events of the post-war period. If the prohibition on the use of force in Article 2(4) [of the U.N. Charter] was to have any meaning, it would have to cover this new and dangerous mode of military activity. . . .²

The critical element of the debate, therefore, is not the identification of the applicable legal standard but the determination of the facts to be measured against that undisputed legal standard. In determining the facts, it is important to assess both the evidence of what has been done and the credibility of what has been said.

I am aware of the allegations made by the government of the United States that my government is sending arms, ammunition, communications equipment and medical supplies to rebels conducting a civil war against the government of El Salvador. Such allegations are false, and constitute nothing more than a pretext for the U.S. to continue its unlawful military and paramilitary activities against Nicaragua intended to overthrow my government. In truth, my government is not engaged, and has not been engaged in, the provision of arms or other supplies to either of the factions engaged in the civil war in El Salvador. [Emphasis added]

Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, Foreign Minister of Nicaragua, in an affidavit filed before the International Court of Justice dated April 21, 1984³

Nicaragua charges that, since at least 1982, the United States has used force against Nicaragua in the form of assistance to Nicaraguans fighting against the Sandinista regime. Any such actions, Nicaragua argues, are illegal and improper since Nicaragua has never taken any action against neighboring countries that would give them or their ally the United States the right to act against Nicaragua in self-defense. The fighting in El Salvador and the violence in Honduras and Costa Rica are, the Sandinistas say, entirely the work of home-grown movements with which Nicaragua has immense sympathy but to which it has provided no material assistance.

Nicaragua's case thus rests on statements by Sandinista represen-

tatives, such as that quoted above from Foreign Minister D'Escoto's affidavit filed with the World Court, denying any involvement in insurgencies and subversion in neighboring countries.⁴ But, as the U.S. Congress, the executive branch, the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, and others who have studied the facts have repeatedly found, the Sandinista leaders have, since at least 1980, engaged in a carefully concerted use of force against its neighbors. A leading critic of U.S. Nicaragua policy, Congressman Edward P. Boland, Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, stated in March 1982:

There is . . . persuasive evidence that the Sandinista government of Nicaragua is helping train insurgents and is transferring arms

¹Other lawful bases for the use of force include actions taken by a state pursuant to decisions of the UN Security Council or at the invitation of another state within its territory.

²Nicaraguan Memorial (Merits), Case concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. the United States of America), International Court of Justice, p. 126. The Sandinistas espouse these principles to Western audiences while internally extolling their commitment to "revolutionary internationalism": the asserted right to aid "national liberation" movements elsewhere. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to judge their actions by the standards which they use to judge others and which they claim to apply to themselves.

³Affidavit of Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, Nicaraguan Exhibit II submitted to the International Court of Justice at its public sitting of April 25-27, 1984, Case concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America), p. 1. Resubmitted to the Court as Annex B to Nicaraguan Memorial (Merits), April 30, 1985.

⁴The only concession the Sandinistas make to the argument that their actions justify a response against them is their claim that the United States would act against them in any event and hence has forfeited any right to assist in the defense of neighboring states. This argument has nothing to do with the facts of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua since 1979. It also has no basis in law—a person who wrestles a gun from the

hands of an attacker cannot himself be charged with assault (nor can the gunman's action itself be excused) on the basis of speculation that he would "no doubt" have struck the gunman even had the gunman not attacked first. The fact that Nicaragua has offered no serious alternative argument constitutes implicit recognition by the Sandinistas that they have no case once it becomes apparent that they have engaged in acts of aggression against their neighbors. In these circumstances, their neighbors and the United States have the right to respond.

and financial support from and through Nicaragua to the insurgents. They are further providing the insurgents bases of operations in Nicaragua. . . . What this says is that, contrary to the repeated denials of Nicaraguan officials, that country is thoroughly involved in supporting the Salvadoran insurgency. That support is such as to greatly aid the insurgents in their struggle with government forces in El Salvador.⁵

The full Congress has on repeated occasions made formal findings concerning Sandinista aggression:

. . . by providing military support (including arms, training, and logistical, command and control, and communications facilities) to groups seeking to overthrow the Government of El Salvador and other Central American governments, the Government . . . of Nicaragua has violated article 18 of the Charter of the [OAS] which declares that no state has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatsoever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state. . . .⁶

That the Sandinistas have engaged and continue to engage in aggression is not in doubt to Nicaragua's neighbors in Central America. There is no need to prove to these countries what they are experiencing on a daily basis. Nor are the Contadora countries⁷ in doubt about the nature of Nicaragua's behavior. Indeed, as El Salvador informed the International Court of Justice last year:

Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto, when pressed at a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Contadora group in July 1983 . . . on the issues of Nicaraguan material support for the subversion in El Salvador, shamelessly and openly admitted such support in front of his colleagues of the Contadora group.⁸

The purpose of this study is to address the reality and consequences of Nicaragua's longstanding and continuing intervention against its immediate neighbors and to do so by focusing on

the factors that are relevant to the legality and morality of the use of force: aggression and self-defense.

The record is documented in this study. It demonstrates that:

- Almost precisely a year after the fall of Somoza in July 1979, the Sandinistas began a major effort to help guerrilla forces overthrow the Government of El Salvador by repeating the strategy followed by the Sandinistas in their own final offensive against Somoza. As a direct result of support by Nicaragua and by other states using Nicaragua as a conduit, the Salvadoran guerrillas were transformed from terrorist factions that had been limited to robberies, kidnappings, and occasional street violence into an organized armed force able to mount a coordinated nationwide offensive, inflicting significant loss of life and economic damage on El Salvador. Although this first intervention failed in January 1981, the Sandinistas have continued to ship and store arms and to provide training, headquarters, and coordination on Nicaraguan territory for a new "prolonged war" strategy. As of early September 1985, Sandinista support continues to be an essential element in the training, communications, and logistics systems of the Salvadoran guerrillas.

- Sandinista security services have, both directly and indirectly, through training, supply, and support of subversive groups in Honduras and Costa Rica, engaged in bombings, assassinations, and other unlawful attacks against the people and institutions of those nations. In Honduras, they supported "vanguard" groups first to supply the attack on El Salvador, then to engage in kidnaping, hijacking, and more recently in efforts to establish guerrilla fronts in the Honduran Departments of Olancho (in 1983) and El Paraiso (in 1984 and 1985). In Costa Rica, the Sandinistas redirected alliances established during the anti-Somoza struggle to support the expanded insurgency in El Salvador,

provided covert support and training for the paramilitary wings of far left groups, and supported several terrorist actions.

- Finally, the Sandinistas' military buildup threatens Nicaragua's neighbors. It has emboldened the Sandinistas to engage in military incursions into the territories of Honduras and Costa Rica, incursions in which citizens of these and other countries have died as a direct result of Nicaraguan military actions.

From the outset the United States has been aware of Nicaraguan aggression and has sought to help end it peacefully, using diplomatic appeals and economic and political measures. Notwithstanding the Sandinistas' claims that the United States has consistently sought for its own purposes to overthrow their regime and has only recently "manufactured" a collective self-defense rationale for its actions, the diplomatic and public record clearly shows that after July 1979 the United States assisted the new government in Nicaragua and tried to develop friendly bilateral relations.

The record shows as well that the United States responded in a measured and graduated fashion when the Sandinistas refused to cease their intervention against other states in Central America. And the record shows that the Sandinistas themselves, through persistent aggression and refusal to participate seriously in efforts to address the regional conflict through peaceful means, bear the primary responsibility for the distrust and resentment of the Sandinistas that is found throughout Central America and for the current strife within Nicaragua itself.

⁵Press release dated March 4, 1982, by Congressman Edward P. Boland, Democrat of Massachusetts, p. 1. (See also Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Report on H.R. 2760 [Amendment to the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1983], H.R. Rep. 98-122, p. 5.)

⁶Intelligence Authorization Act for 1984 (P.L. 98-215), Section 109(a). See also Section 722(c)(2)(C) of the International Security and

Development Cooperation Act of 1985, approved August 8, 1985, which expresses the finding of Congress that "the . . . Government of Nicaragua . . . has flagrantly violated . . . the security of the nations in the region, in that it . . . has committed and refused to cease aggression in the form of armed subversion against its neighbors . . ." (P.L. 99-83).

⁷See Appendix 1, Glossary.

⁸Declaration of Intervention of the Republic of El Salvador, Case concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America), submitted to the International Court of Justice, August 15, 1984, pp. 10-11.

II. The Praxis of Intervention

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) was founded in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in July 1961, at a meeting among Tomas Borge, Carlos Fonseca, and Silvio Mayorga. All had been student activists in Nicaragua; all had participated in preliminary meetings in Cuba; all identified with the Cuban revolution and with armed conflict. The first armed FSLN guerrilla units entered Nicaragua from Honduras in 1962 carrying Cuban-supplied weapons.¹

By the time the FSLN was founded, internationalism and guerrilla warfare had already been united in Sandinista praxis in the form of the "Rigoberto Lopez Perez" Column. This guerrilla group had been organized in mid-1959 with advice from Ernesto Che Guevara and supplied by Cuba. The 55 Nicaraguans, Cubans, and other internationalists who belonged to it were dispersed by the Honduran Army before they could enter Nicaragua.²

The FSLN suffered repeated defeats in its armed opposition to the Somoza dynasty, which after 1967 was headed by Anastasio Somoza Debayle. Fifteen years after their opening attacks, Fonseca and Mayorga were dead and FSLN forces had no more than 300 guerrillas belonging to three feuding factions.³

34 A new strategy to gain alliances beyond the borders of Nicaragua,

The foreign policy of the Sandinista People's Revolution is based on the full exercise of national sovereignty and independence and on the principle of revolutionary internationalism.

FSLN "72-hour Document,"
September 1979⁴

This revolution goes beyond our borders. Our revolution was always internationalist from the moment Sandino fought [his first battle].

Tomas Borge
July 19, 1981⁵

We cannot cease being internationalists unless we cease being revolutionaries.

Bayardo Arce
May 6, 1984⁶

especially with non-Marxist states and organizations, gradually developed in the wake of a failed October 1977 campaign against Somoza. Events soon gave

the FSLN the opportunity to develop alliances with moderate and democratic groups and individuals who previously would have shunned the FSLN because of its Cuban ties and penchant for violence. In January 1978, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, the editor of *La Prensa*, Nicaragua's leading newspaper, was murdered by assailants widely believed to be associated with Somoza. Chamorro was Somoza's leading critic and a strong democrat. His death set off the national revulsion that eventually destroyed Somoza.

Throughout 1978, while Nicaraguan business, religious, and civic leaders were moving irrevocably into opposition to Somoza, Armando Ulises Estrada, a high-ranking member of the America Department of the Communist Party of Cuba, made numerous secret trips seeking to unify the three major factions of the FSLN. In March 1979, the three Sandinista factions entered into a formalized alliance with Fidel Castro's support.⁷ Once unity was achieved, Cuba increased covert support operations, providing weapons, training, and advisory personnel to the FSLN. Estrada and Julian Lopez Diaz, later Cuba's first ambassador to Sandinista Nicaragua, concentrated on building a supply network for channeling arms and supplies to Sandinista guerrilla forces.⁸ By May

¹Claribel Alegria and D.J.F. Falkoll, *Nicaragua: la revolucion sandinista* (Serie Popular Era) Mexico, 1982, quote Borge on the establishment of the FSLN and its 1962 operation on pp. 166-168. The organization established in Honduras in July 1961 was originally to be named simply the National Liberation Front. "Sandinista" was added because of Fonseca's belief in the need for a historic Nicaraguan symbol. In this way, Augusto Sandino, a nationalist, became the symbol of an internationalist movement.

²The defeat brought a wounded Fonseca to Havana where he made personal contacts with the Cuban leader that contributed to the founding of the FSLN. In 1960, Borge also met with Che Guevara in Havana.

³Leaders of the three factions were: Tomas Borge, "Prolonged Popular War," Humberto and Daniel Ortega, "Third Force" or "Insurrectionist," and Jaime Wheelock, "Proletarian." The factions are described in George Black, *Triumph of the People: The Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua* (London, Zed, 1981), pp. 91-97.

⁴*Analisis de la Coyuntura y Tareas de la Revolucion Popular Sandinista (Tesis Politicas y Militares Presentadas por la Direccion Nacional del Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional en la Asamblea de Cuadros "RIGOBERTO LOPEZ PEREZ" celebrada el 21, 22 y 23 de Septiembre de 1979)*, Managua, October 1979, p. 24 (often referred to as the "72-Hour Document").

⁵At a military ceremony broadcast on Managua domestic service, as reported by *FBIS* on July 21, 1981.

⁶*Comandante Bayardo Arce's Secret Speech before the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN)*, Department of State Publication 9422, Inter-American Series 118 (Washington, D.C., March 1985), p. 4, translated from the text published in *La Vanguardia*, Barcelona, August 23, 1984.

⁷Cuban radio announced as early as December 1978 that the three factions had agreed to merge. Also see Richard L. Millet, "Historical Setting," in *Nicaragua: A Country Study* (Washington, 1982), p. 51. Black (*op. cit.*), pp. 142-148, discusses unification without mentioning Cuba.

⁸Cuba today has an extensive intelligence and training apparatus, modern military forces, and a large and sophisticated propaganda network. Making Che Guevara's attempts look amateurish, the Castro government is now able to utilize agents and contacts nurtured over 20-25 years. Most of the covert operations in Nicaragua were planned and coordinated by the America Department of the Cuban Communist Party. Headed by Manuel Pineiro Losada, the America Department emerged in 1974 to centralize operational control of Cuba's covert activities in the Western Hemisphere. The department brings together the expertise of the Cuban military and the General Directorate of Intelligence into a farflung operation that includes secret training camps in Cuba, networks for covert movement of personnel and materiel between Cuba and abroad, and sophisticated propaganda support. (See *Cuba's Renewed Support for Violence in Latin America*, Department of State Special Report No. 90, December 14, 1981.)

1979, these supply and support operations reached levels that helped neutralize the conventional military superiority of Somoza's National Guard and permitted the launching of a "final offensive."

Within weeks of Somoza's fall in July 1979, the FSLN was reaffirming its "internationalism" and solidarity with guerrillas elsewhere in Central America. Using their ties with Cuba, the Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc nations, the FSLN began to develop a monopoly hold on domestic power and to convert Nicaragua into an operational center of "revolutionary internationalism."⁹ FSLN leaders in Managua quickly confirmed relationships of mutual support with the leaders of various armed movements throughout Central America. Contacts were also established with organizations and political movements that were not directly engaged in armed struggle but that could become, or were already, part of a regional support network for armed revolutionary activities in Central America.

In 1979, the FSLN's program, which declared that the "principle of revolutionary internationalism" was one of the

keys to Sandinista foreign policy, had been discussed and approved without publicity.¹⁰ By 1981, the Sandinistas felt confident enough to reissue their 1969 program, which was more specific. The FSLN called for "authentic unity" of Central America to "lead the way to coordinating the efforts to achieve national liberation."¹¹

To coordinate "national liberation" efforts, the Sandinistas developed by mid-1980 the apparatus to sustain regionwide guerrilla operations and to give them political as well as military support. With the assistance of the Cubans, Soviets, and East Europeans, the Sandinistas created two institutions essential to such operations: the Department of International Relations (DRI) of the FSLN, and the Fifth Directorate of Intelligence associated with the government's General Directorate of State Security (DGSE).¹²

The Sandinistas' practice of revolutionary internationalism is implemented largely through these two organizations. The DRI, which is closely modeled after the America Department of the Cuban Communist Party, provides administrative support for political trainees from Central America. Headed by Julio Lopez Campos, it reports directly to the FSLN National Directorate and is responsible for establishing and main-

taining support networks for the DGSE and the Fifth Directorate of Intelligence. The Fifth Directorate has been headed since its creation by Renan Montero Corrales (former name, Andres Barahona Lopez), a Cuban-born naturalized Nicaraguan who was with Che Guevara in Bolivia. It provides the operatives and the liaison necessary to maintain the clandestine links and support networks for activities on behalf of the guerrilla organizations in the Central American region.

Sandinista success in mediating differences among four Guatemalan guerrilla groups in November 1980 made clear Nicaragua's new role. Unlike the similar previous Nicaraguan (1979) and Salvadoran (1980) guerrilla unity agreements, which were forged in Cuba, the statement of "revolutionary unity" among the Guatemalan guerrilla organizations was signed and dated in Managua.¹³

Those attending the signing epitomize the apparatus: members of the FSLN National Directorate, delegates from the Cuban Communist Party, including America Department chief Manuel Pineiro, and the Managua representatives of the Salvadoran Unified Revolutionary Directorate, the DRU.

⁹In this, of course, the Sandinistas are squarely in line with Cuban doctrine and practice. Article 12 of the Cuban Constitution "espouses the principles of proletarian internationalism and of the combative solidarity of the peoples." Section (c) states that "help to . . . peoples that struggle for their liberation constitutes . . . [an] internationalist right and duty." Between mid-1979 and mid-1981, the period in which the FSLN effectively drove out the other members of the national coalition that defeated Somoza, Cuban involvement in the daily affairs of the Nicaraguan Government became comprehensive and direct. Cuban military, security, and intelligence advisers served in many key roles in such ministries as Defense and Interior.

¹⁰See footnote 4, p. 3.

¹¹From "The Historic Program of the FSLN" in Ressel and Vandermeer, *The Nicaragua Reader* (New York, Grove Press, 1983), p. 145. 1981 was also the year in which Minister of Defense Humberto Ortega declared in a private meeting with army and militia officers that:

"Marxism-Leninism is the scientific doctrine that guides our Revolution, the in-

strument of analysis of our Vanguard for understanding its historic role and for carrying out the Revolution; . . . Without Sandinismo we cannot be Marxist-Leninists, and Sandinismo without Marxism-Leninism cannot be revolutionary; that is why they are indissolubly linked and that is why our moral force is Sandinismo, our political force is Sandinismo, and our doctrine is Marxism-Leninism." (From the text printed October 9, 1981, in *La Nacion*, Tegucigalpa, using the edition of the speech circulated on August 25, 1981, by the Political and Cultural Training Section of the Sandinista People's Army.)

¹²According to Miguel Bolanos Hunter, who served in Nicaraguan counterintelligence 1979-1983, in 1983 the 2,800-3,000 Nicaraguans in the state security services were supplemented by about 400 Cubans, 70 Soviets, 40-50 East Germans, and 20-25 Bulgarians. He added that many of the Cuban military advisers were posing as civilian teachers. (Don Oberdorfer and Joanne Omang, "Nicaraguan Bares Plan to Discredit Foes," *Washington Post*, June 19, 1983, p. A1).

¹³See the unity statement entitled, *Principios Generales y Acuerdos de la Unidad de las Organizaciones Revolucionarias EGP, FAR, ORPA y PGT* (Managua, Nicaragua, November 2, 1980). According to one of the Guatemalan participants, the four guerrilla groups accepted an invitation from the FSLN to utilize "the optimal conditions of security [in Nicaragua] . . . so that they could dedicate themselves to the process of unity." The plan was to negotiate in Managua and then fly to Havana to sign the document of unity in the presence of Fidel Castro, members of the Cuban Communist Party, representatives from the FSLN and the Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU) of El Salvador. However, a decision was made to sign the document in Managua to reaffirm "the coordination and unity of Central America's revolutionary vanguard forces" and to be the first revolutionary organizations to unify on Central American soil. (Drawn from a tape-recorded account entitled *Informe de Manolo* [Manolo's Report] and obtained by Guatemalan security forces in March 1981.)

The featured speaker was Bayardo Arce, who spoke on behalf of the FSLN and promised "unconditional assistance to the revolutionary process in Guatemala and El Salvador."¹⁴

To ensure that they would be invulnerable to retaliation from their neighbors for their expanding internationalist role, the Sandinistas undertook a substantial increase in Nicaragua's conventional military power.¹⁵ By the end of 1980, Nicaragua's armed forces were twice as large as the Somoza National Guard at its height. The Sandinista People's Army doubled in size again by the end of 1982.¹⁶

The country studies that follow illustrate the practical content the Sandinistas give to "revolutionary internationalism."

¹⁴*Informe de Manolo*, pp. 18-22.

¹⁵Concern about "counter-revolutionary" activities by former National Guardsmen and other opponents of the regime was expressed from the earliest days (e.g., in the "72-Hour Document" cited in note 4, p. 3.). But the Sandinistas do not assert that the armed resistance had reached dimensions requiring a military buildup before 1982. (See *Contrarrevolucion [sic]: Desarrollo y Consecuencias, Datos Basicos 1980-1985*, Managua, 1985). In addition to attempting to preclude military action by their neighbors in response to the Sandinistas' intervention in their affairs, the explanation for the early focus on developing a large military establishment also may be found in the capacity it gave the FSLN to exercise control over Nicaraguan society. The country's new armed forces were organized around the FSLN's armed elements, which numbered some 5,000 by July 1979. Significantly, they were denominated the Sandinista People's Army and had an explicitly political, FSLN-related function as well as the customary duty of protecting Nicaragua from attack. The police forces were also organized by the FSLN. The party (with the Ministry of Interior troops commanded by FSLN Directorate member Tomas Borge and other smaller FSLN-controlled forces) thus had a monopoly on force within Nicaragua exercised through highly politicized bodies.

¹⁶According to the International Institute of Strategic Studies, Nicaragua's regular armed forces numbered 7,100 men and 4,000 paramilitary forces in 1977, just before the civil war heated up in 1978-9. (See *The Military Balance 1977-1978*, London, 1977, p. 74.) By 1982, the Sandinista armed forces numbered 21,500 and its paramilitary forces around 50,000. (See *The Military Balance 1982-1983*, London, 1982, pp. 104-106.) By 1984, the Sandinista People's Army numbered 61,800 regular troops. (See *The Military Balance 1984-1985*, London, 1984, p. 123).

A. El Salvador

Before the Sandinista Directorate took power in Managua, there were guerrillas in El Salvador but no guerrilla war. Extremist forces of El Salvador's left were violent but fragmented into competing factions. They had neither a unified organization nor the heavier, more destructive modern weaponry. To use Carpio's imagery (see p. 6), the Sandinistas were decisive in uniting the internal Salvadoran struggle with a broader international conflict.

Building on a base of solidarity in exile and armed opposition,¹ Sandinista support for violent warfare in El Salvador falls into two distinct periods:

- An attempt to repeat in El Salvador the pattern of the Sandinistas' own final military offensive against Somoza; and
- "Prolonged war" against El Salvador's economy, elections, and institutions after the first approach failed.

¹During the war against Somoza, several Salvadoran groups on the extreme left provided support to the FSLN, but Carpio and his FPL and the Prolonged Popular War faction of the FSLN (FSLN/GPP) headed by Tomas Borge probably had the closest links. Carpio and Borge were cut to similar patterns: both formed militant splinter groups; both were rigidly partisan in their revolutionary philosophies, espousing prolonged armed struggle from a rural support base; and both were committed "internationalists." Part of the estimated \$50-100 million accumulated in 1977-79 by leftist extremist groups in ransom and protection payments was invested in the Sandinista revolution next door. Salvadoran radicals engaged in acts of "revolutionary solidarity" such as the February 14, 1978, People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) attack on the Nicaraguan Embassy in San Salvador, proclaimed as an "act of repudiation against Somoza" (*FBIS*, February 15, 1978).

Mobilizing for a "Final Offensive"

On July 21, 1979, 4 days after Somoza fled from Nicaragua, both Carpio's Popular Liberation Forces (FPL) and Borge's GPP faction of the FSLN were present at a meeting in Managua to discuss Sandinista support for armed struggle in El Salvador. The mobilization of external support did not get fully underway, however, until a meeting held in Havana in December 1979 produced agreement among the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCES), the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN), and the FPL to form a trilateral coordinating body.² During 1980, the original three were joined by two additional groups, the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and the Central American Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRTC) to form the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), which, with its political arm, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), has served as the umbrella organization for the Salvadoran guerrilla movement.

²Detailed information on these meetings, the subsequent trip of Salvadoran Communist Party (PCES) Secretary General Jorge Shafik Handal to the Soviet bloc, and the specifics of the supply routes through Nicaragua, was contained in PCES documents obtained in November 1980, and ERP documents collected in January 1981. This information was published in the State Department's Special Report No. 80, *Communist Interference in El Salvador*, February 23, 1981. Facsimiles of 19 documents were also released that same day: Department of State, *Communist Interference in El Salvador: Documents Demonstrating Communist Support of the Salvadoran Insurgency*, February 23, 1981 (cited hereafter as *Documents*). The authenticity of these documents and of the story they tell have since been corroborated by new intelligence sources and defectors. (See also "Response to Stories Published in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* about Special Report No. 80," Department of State, June 17, 1981, which contains a 25-point response to the factual criticisms of the February 23 report.)

Redirecting the Costa Rican Networks. The first step was to revitalize the networks originally established in Costa Rica during the struggle against Somoza to support armed struggle in El Salvador. Aided by a few Costa Rican officials, the Cubans arranged for the collection of Sandinista arms still in Costa Rica. Modest amounts of arms were infiltrated into El Salvador by Costa Rican and Panamanian pilots. On June 15, 1980, a twin engine Aero Commander crashed in El Salvador. The weapons and ammunition on board were recovered by the Salvadoran military. Arms from Costa Rican caches were also smuggled overland assisted by the FSLN and the Communist Party in Honduras.³

Nicaragua Becomes the Hub. During the second half of 1980, Nicaragua became the center of the clandestine arms flow. Unlike Costa Rica and Honduras, Nicaragua provided a favorable environment, including secure communications and transportation links to Cuba by both sea and air.

In late May 1980, after negotiations in Havana, the ERP joined the guerrilla coalition. The new coalition, known as the Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU), issued a press release in Havana announcing the broadened alliance. During this visit, the DRU leaders met three times with Fidel Castro and discussed military plans with the Cuban Directorate of Special Operations—the same covert operations/special forces unit that had organized Cuba's intervention in Angola.⁴

After the Havana meetings, DRU leaders went to Managua to meet with Sandinista officials. One Salvadoran par-

They say that we are sending weapons to El Salvador but they have not offered any real proof. But let us suppose that weapons have reached El Salvador from here. This is possible. More than that, it is possible that Nicaraguan combatants have gone to El Salvador, but this cannot be blamed on any decision of ours.

Tomas Borge
April 1981⁶

*One thing is evident, the members of the [Sandinista] Directorate and all its working teams, some inside the country and others outside the country, are steadfastly at work fully aware of the need to **unite the internal struggle with international solidarity** and with the struggle of all peoples for the liberation of Central America and El Salvador . . . The Central American peoples' struggle is one single struggle. [Emphasis added]*

Salvadoran Guerrilla Leader
Salvador Cayetano Carpio
Managua, April 9, 1983⁷

ticipant reported that, in the first week of June, the FSLN Directorate offered a headquarters ("sede") in Nicaragua for the DRU with "all measures of security," that it was "disposed to contribute in material terms," and that it "assumes the cause of El Salvador as its own."⁵

Transshipping Weapons From the Soviet Bloc. While other DRU leaders went to Managua, Salvadoran Communist Party leader Jorge Shafik Handal left Havana for Moscow. In early June, Shafik Handal met with Mikhail Kudachkin, an official of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee. The Soviets suggested that Shafik Handal travel to Vietnam to seek arms. In Vietnam, Shafik Handal was received by

Le Duan, the Secretary General of the Vietnamese Communist Party, and other high-ranking party and military officials. The Vietnamese agreed as a "first contribution" to provide 60 tons of arms—overwhelmingly of U.S. manufacture, including 1,620 M-16 automatic rifles with 1,500,000 rounds of ammunition, enough to equip an entire combat infantry battalion.⁸

Managing the Weapons Flow in Nicaragua. FSLN Directorate member Bayardo Arce met with members of the DRU General Staff in July 1980 to review the logistical infrastructure for the guerrilla war in El Salvador. Arce

³A Special Commission established in June 1980 by the Costa Rican legislature confirmed that the clandestine arms-supply link between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, established in the fight against Somoza, continued to function between Costa Rica and El Salvador after July 1979. According to the Commission's report, "arms trafficking, originating in Costa Rica or through Costa Rican territory, [began] toward El Salvador, directly or using Honduras as a bridge." The quotation is from the Commission's Report, which was excerpted May 15, 1981 in *La Nacion*, San Jose, and reprinted by *FBIS* on June 12, 1981.

⁴"Informe de Eduardo/Viaje de 5 de Mayo al 8 de Junio/80" (Report of trip of Eduardo from May 5 to June 8, 1980), *Documents*, D, pp. 2-3.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶*Bohemia*, Caracas, April 20-26, 1981.

⁷The senior FMLN *Comandante* until his suicide, Carpio was speaking at funeral services in Managua for murdered FPL *Comandante* Ana Maria, as transmitted by Managua domestic service, April 9, 1983, and by *FBIS*, April 11, 1983. The murder, funeral, investigation, and suicide were all covered in great detail in the FSLN newspaper, *Barricada*, during April 1983.

⁸See Appendix 5. From June 19 to July 3, 1980, Shafik Handal visited the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Hungary. His requests produced several promises of arms and military equipment. The East Germans told Handal that they would be willing to divert some medical supplies they had already sent to Nicaragua, and that they would train Salvadoran guerrillas. Because they did not possess suitable Western arms, both East Germany and Hungary raised the possibility of exchanging communist for Western-manufactured arms with either Ethiopia or Angola. The Czechs promised Czech-made arms, of types already available in the West so as to maintain plausible denial.

questioned the DRU's military and political preparations but agreed to furnish ammunition, arrange meetings with the FSLN military commission to discuss military matters, and suggested that they might provide Western-manufactured weapons from FSLN stocks.⁹ By that time, the Nicaraguan security forces had already begun to receive weapons from the Soviet bloc. As bloc weapons were absorbed, the Sandinistas transferred some Western arms in their inventories to the Salvadoran insurgents.

By mid-September 1980, the arms promised to Shafik Handal during his earlier travels were en route to Cuba and Nicaragua. In September and October, aircraft flight frequencies and intelligence reporting both indicated a sharp increase in the flow of military equipment into Nicaragua from Cuba. Sandino International Airport was closed for normal traffic between 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. for several weeks to accommodate cargo planes ferrying arms and other equipment from Cuba.

In late September, the United States made strong protests to the Nicaraguan Government about the arms flow from Nicaragua to El Salvador. Fearful that discovery would jeopardize the recently approved \$75 million in economic support funds from the United States, the Sandinistas held up transshipment of the arms for 1 month—despite Salvadoran guerrilla appeals to move these weapons onward. To the U.S. demarche, the Nicaraguan Government responded that while some Nicaraguans, including individual officials, might be involved in arms shipments, the government itself was not responsible.¹⁰

In mid-October, Havana was the site of a meeting at which representatives of the Communist parties of Central America, Mexico, and Panama agreed to

set up a commission to oversee the provision of material aid to the Salvadoran guerrillas. Originally scheduled for Managua, the meeting was shifted to Havana at the request of the Sandinistas so as to obscure their involvement.

At the end of October 1980, immediately after the second tranche of a specially enacted \$75 million program of U.S. aid to Nicaragua was authorized for disbursement, the Nicaraguans provided the Salvadoran guerrillas with a new delivery schedule and resumed weapons deliveries by sea and air on an even larger scale than before the suspension. Also in late October, the Salvadoran guerrillas decided to operate a clandestine radio station with the

The Salvadoran revolutionaries do not have military bases here. If they have bases outside of El Salvador, they are in Guatemala and Honduras.

Daniel Ortega
June 1983¹¹

technical help of the Cubans and Nicaraguans.¹² On December 15, *Radio Liberacion* began to broadcast from Nicaragua. A second clandestine station, *Radio Venceremos*, subsequently began broadcasting in the vicinity of the Honduras-El Salvador border.

On November 1, 1980, the DRU logistics coordinator in Managua informed the guerrilla General Staff that approximately 120 tons of military

equipment were still in Nicaragua awaiting shipment to El Salvador. He added that approximately 300–400 tons of weapons and materiel would be in Cuba by mid-November, ready for transfer to Nicaragua and then to El Salvador. The DRU coordinator urged the armed groups in El Salvador to work harder to absorb more arms shipments, noting that some communist countries had doubled their promised aid and adding that: "This is the first revolution in Latin America to which they have committed themselves unconditionally with assistance before the seizure of power."¹³

Air Routes From Nicaragua. Existing land infiltration routes could not move this growing volume of arms in time for the planned FMLN offensive of early 1981. Accordingly, Nicaragua—with Cuban support—assumed a more direct role and began airlifting arms from airfields in Nicaragua. This airlift was directed by the Commander of the Nicaraguan Air Force, Raul Venerio Granera, and a Cuban adviser.

The principal staging area came to be an airfield at Papalonal. The pattern and speed of construction at Papalonal, which is in an isolated area 23 nautical miles northwest of Managua, lacking adjacent commercial or economic activity, made clear its military function. In late July 1980, this airfield was an agricultural dirt airstrip approximately 800 meters long. By December, photography revealed a lengthened and graded runway with hard dispersal areas and storage buildings under construction. By January 1981, the strip had been lengthened to 1,200 meters. A turnaround had been added at each end. A dispersal parking area with three hardstands had been constructed at the west end of the runway. Three parking aprons had been cleared, and three

⁹"Informe Sobre Viaje" (Trip Report), *Documents*, G, p. 3. The meeting with Arce took place on July 23, 1980.

¹⁰The diplomatic exchange is discussed below in Section III. The guerrillas discuss their logistics problems in *Documents*, J, K, L, M, N, and O.

¹¹*Time*, June 6, 1983, p. 18.

¹²*Documents*, P, transmits an "official" FMLN request for both a permanent clandestine station in Nicaragua and a mobile radio unit to overcome the success Duarte was having in "confusing" the people.

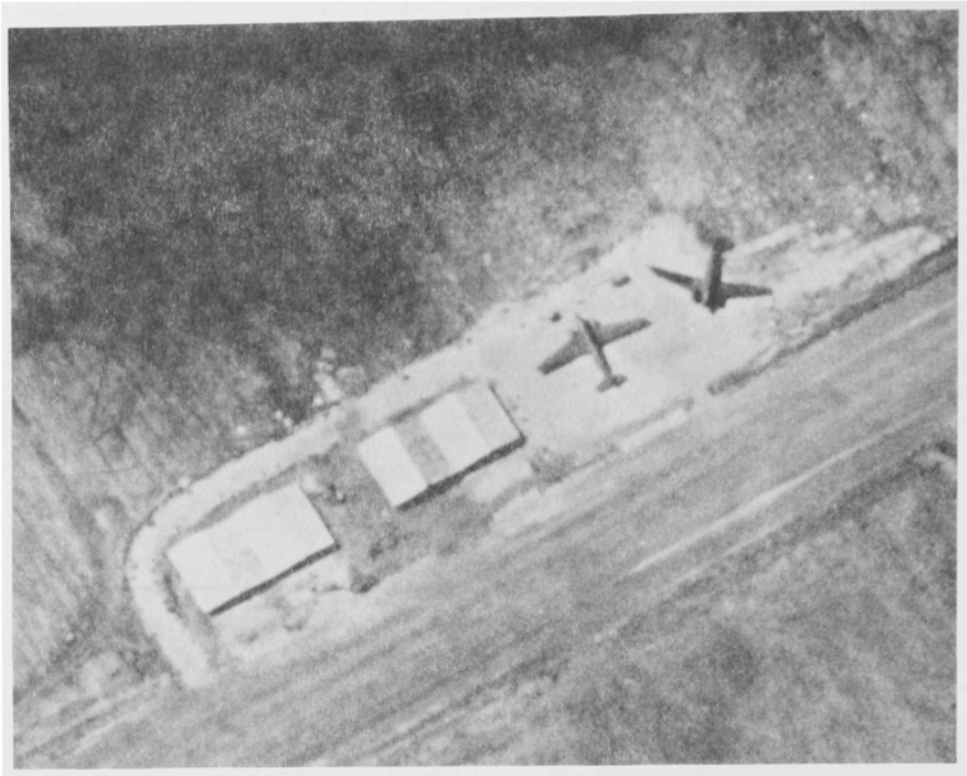
¹³"Informe #4" (Report #4) addressed to "Joaquin, Jacobo, Marcial, DRU del FMLN,"

Documents, K, p. 2. This hand-written letter-report from the PCES files adds that: "It is impressive how all countries in the socialist bloc fully committed themselves to meet our every request and some have even doubled their promised aid."

hangar or storage buildings, each about 15 meters wide, had been constructed on the aprons.¹⁴

On January 2, 1981, a C-47 was observed at Papalonal for the first time. Two C-47s were observed in February. These C-47s and DC-3s (the civilian version) were used to ferry larger cargoes of arms from Papalonal to areas of guerrilla infiltration in southeastern El Salvador. Several pilots were identified in Nicaragua who regularly flew the route into El Salvador. Radar tracking also indicated flights from Papalonal to southeastern El Salvador.

On January 24, 1981, a C-47 dropped arms by parachute in the vicinity of a small strip in southeastern El Salvador. On January 24, 1981, a Cessna from Nicaragua crashed upon takeoff after unloading passengers at an airfield in El Salvador close to where the C-47 air-drop occurred. A second plane, a Piper Aztec, sent to recover the downed crew, was strafed on the ground by the Salvadoran Air Force. The pilot and numerous weapons were captured. The pilot stated he was an employee of the Nicaraguan national airlines, LANICA, and that the flight originated from Sandino International Airport in Managua.¹⁵



In one of several photographs taken beginning in mid-1980, two C-47/DC-3 cargo planes are parked next to sheds at the Papalonal airstrip. Note that fresh grading appears in a lighter tone on this photograph, which was taken on March 12, 1981.

¹⁴Following is an extract from an intelligence summary prepared for the White House on January 9, 1981, the day before the "Final Offensive" was launched. The analysis appears on pages 2 and 3 of a classified memorandum entitled "Nicaragua-Cuba: Increasing Support for Central American Insurgents." It was confirmed by subsequent events and information in virtually every respect although the volume of weapons, estimated below at about 60 tons by December, proved larger than this contemporary analysis suggested.

"Nicaragua has taken a more direct role in supplying arms and materiel to the Salvadoran left, which is now receiving larger quantities of sophisticated weapons. Multiple sources previously had reported Sandinista arms shipments to El Salvador—by boat across the Gulf of Fonseca, by land via Honduras, or by air with the collaboration of Panamanian and Costa Rican gunrunners. Recent reporting, however, indicates that by last November the FSLN had begun airlifting weapons directly from Nicaragua to El Salvador.

"Four separate sources have reported on such flights or related preparations. In November, a Costa Rican arms trafficker made a "paper sale" of several planes to a Honduran aviation company to conceal acquisition of the aircraft by the FSLN. A second source identified two of the same planes making clandestine flights from the isolated Papalonal airstrip in

Nicaragua to Lempa and Santa Teresa airstrips in El Salvador. Costa Rican pilots in the pay of the Nicaraguan Government conducted six flights during November, delivering an estimated 5,000 pounds of arms—FAL and Galil rifles, ammunition, grenades, and dynamite. The clandestine night flights were coordinated with Salvadoran leftists who secured and lit the airfields and unloaded the aircraft in minutes. A Nicaraguan Government official and a Cuban adviser reportedly oversaw the operations. By December, some 60 tons of weapons had been stockpiled in Nicaragua for transfer to El Salvador.

"Following the crash of one of the planes at Santa Teresa on 25 November, FSLN authorities ordered a halt to further flights until mid-December; at the pilots' request, the stand-down was extended until after the holiday season. Plans call for at least four flights per week from both Papalonal and Rosario airstrips, with daily flights once the Salvadoran insurgents begin a general offensive

"In addition, a Nicaraguan Government C-47—piloted by a Sandinista Air Force (FAS) officer and with a joint Nicaraguan-Cuban crew—was to begin ferrying arms to El Salvador in mid-December, according to detailed information provided by two separate sources. The flights, under the supervision of Col. Carlos Rodriguez, Cuban adviser to the FAS, were to originate from an unnamed airstrip in the same area as Papalonal.

"Recent imagery [aerial photography] substantiates this reporting. Papalonal airstrip was lengthened and new hangars and parking aprons were constructed late last year. Moreover, imagery also confirms the presence of a new C-47 at Managua's Sandino Airport on dates when our sources reported the planes' acquisition and the December training flights; imagery also subsequently showed a C-47 at Papalonal in early January at the same time there was a return to the normal inventory of C-47 planes in Managua

"There are indications of more widespread Nicaraguan support operations in the offing. A camouflaged communications intercept site has been reported in extreme northern Nicaragua across the bay from El Salvador, and its presence appears confirmed by imagery. It will reportedly be augmented with additional equipment in the near future. This area was earlier reported to be the planned staging ground for a future Nicaraguan-supported assault by Salvadoran insurgents against a coastal Salvadoran target."

¹⁵The *FBIS* for January 27 and 28, 1981 carries accounts of this incident from *ACAN*, *ACAN-EFE*, *Latin*, and *La Prensa Grafica*, San Salvador, January 26, 1981.

Land and Sea Shipments From Nicaragua. While air resupply was playing a key role, infiltration was also taking place by land and sea. Overland arms shipments reached El Salvador through Honduras from Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Small launches operating out of several Nicaraguan Pacific ports crossed the Gulf of Fonseca at night, carrying arms, ammunition, and personnel.¹⁶

In mid-January 1981, Honduran security forces intercepted a trailer truck in Comayagua that was part of an arms supply network run by FPL guerrillas working through Nicaragua. The truck contained weapons and ammunition in a false compartment in the roof. This one truck contained over 100 M-16/AR-15 automatic rifles, 50 81mm mortar rounds, approximately 100,000 rounds of 5.56mm ammunition, machinegun belts, field packs, and first aid kits. Over 50 of these M-16/AR-15 rifles were traced to Vietnam where they had been left when U.S. troops departed.¹⁷

In May 1981, a Salvadoran defector from the Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL), Luis Alvarado Saravia, made a lengthy statement to the Salvadoran press. He detailed how the Nicaraguan Government provided food, transportation, and false documents to enable him to train in Cuba. He also described movements of guerrillas and arms from Nicaragua into El Salvador days prior to the January 1981 offensive. The arms and supplies he described included 2,200 rifles (FALs, M-1s, and M-2s), two radio transmitters, ammunition, grenades, more than 15 rocket launch-

ers, at least three .50 caliber and one .30 caliber machineguns, 125 boxes of TNT, and 10 M-79 grenade launchers.

Impact of Nicaraguan Aid. By December 1980, the guerrillas were employing weapons never before used in El Salvador. Among them were U.S.-made M-16 rifles and M-79 grenade launchers. Unlike the M-1s and the G-3s used by the Salvadoran military, most of these weapons were not available in the quantities involved in the FMLN offensive either locally or on the Central American black market. They were a far cry from the handguns, hunting rifles, shotguns, and homemade explosives which until mid-1980 had been the basis of the guerrilla arsenal in El Salvador.

Before January 1981, no nationwide or even departmentwide offensive had been launched by the guerrillas. In fact, the DRU and the FMLN, and even the FAL, one of their key components, were all founded only *after* the FSLN had demonstrated its willingness to help.

The "Final Offensive." On January 10, 1981, broadcasting from a clandestine radio station located inside Nicaragua, the guerrillas proclaimed that "the decisive hour has come to initiate the decisive military and insurrectional battles for the seizure of power."¹⁸ Radio Managua took up the call, broadcasting: "A few hours after the FMLN General Command ordered a final offensive to defeat the regime established by the military-Christian Democratic junta, the first victories in the combat waged by our forces began being reported."¹⁹

Within the first hours of January 10, four San Salvador radio stations had

been captured; the guerrillas broadcast a tape to rally support, announcing that the assassination of Jose Napoleon Duarte and other Salvadoran leaders was imminent. Using the weapons smuggled from Nicaragua, guerrilla units struck at 40-50 locations throughout El Salvador, downed two helicopters, and overran a National Guard post. Hit-and-run street actions were everywhere. In the cities, buses were burned; in the countryside, guerrillas boarded buses and exhorted surprised passengers to take up arms. The cities of San Salvador, Santa Ana, Chalchuapa, Chalatenango, and Zacatecoluca came under especially heavy fire. The governor of Santa Ana described the city as "under siege." Both airports were closed, their access roads cut.²⁰

The guerrillas had hoped for a popular insurrection, which, with their armed attacks, would result in a total breakdown of the government and lead to an immediate victory. This did not happen because the overwhelming majority of El Salvador's population ignored the guerrillas' appeals. Although four army officers joined the guerrillas, the army remained basically united and fought back.

The costs of this Nicaragua-based assault on El Salvador's society were heavy. They were all the more tragic in that by 1981 the Salvadoran Government was beginning to address the serious political, social, and economic problems that most concerned the people of El Salvador. In its commitment to reform, the Christian Democratic/armed forces junta of El Salvador had the full political support of the United States. On January 16, 1981, President Carter reacted to Sandinista

¹⁶Arquimedes Canadas, alias Alejandro Montenegro, described these routes in detail after his arrest in Honduras in August 1982. (See Appendix 3 and Hedrick Smith, "A Former Salvadoran Rebel Chief Tells of Arms from Nicaragua," *New York Times*, July 12, 1984, p. A10.) An individual account of this same period was provided by Salvadoran guerrilla Santo Salome Morales, who defected in Honduras in September 1981, reported that he and 12 others went from El Salvador to Nicaragua via a point near the Gulf of Fonseca in May 1980. From Managua, they proceeded to Cuba where they received extensive military training,

together with over 900 other Salvadorans. Morales said he was trained in underwater demolition.

¹⁷ACAN-EFE reported the seizure on January 21, 1981 with a Tegucigalpa dateline (*FBIS*, January 22, 1981). (See also Appendix 5.) Although many weapons only have lot numbers that do not allow definitive traces, M-16s can be individually traced once corresponding records of serial numbers are located. Most of the M-16s in the truck referred to above were traced to Vietnam.

¹⁸See "A Call by the General Command of the FMLN to Initiate the General Offensive," reproduced on pp. 82-83 of the FMLN-FDR booklet *El Salvador on the*

Threshold of a Democratic Revolutionary Victory, distributed in the United States in English during February-March 1981.

¹⁹The next day, January 11, 1981, the FSLN paper *Barricada* published an Extra that bannered "The final offensive has begun," complete with photographs of advancing guerrillas.

²⁰The FMLN's own summary of its actions as of January 21, 1981, is reprinted in Appendix 6; also see "El Salvador's Civil War," *Newsweek*, January 26, 1981. By the time fighting slowed, some 10 days after the offensive began, about 400 people were dead and 800 injured.

arms supply activities by authorizing a modest resupply of ammunition.²¹ Except for transportation and communication equipment and other non-lethal items, the United States had provided no military aid, and no weapons or ammunition, to El Salvador since 1977.

Prolonged War

The failure of the "final offensive" produced a decision to carry on a prolonged war of attrition and economic sabotage while drawing on Nicaragua to increase the military strength of the guerrillas.²² Although the FMLN was generally rejected by the population at large, guerrilla numbers continued to increase for some time after the "final offensive." The sophistication of their military equipment and strategy also improved.

Seeking to compensate for the failure of the "final offensive," the FMLN launched a series of terrorist attacks starting in late February 1981. The American Embassy in San Salvador was rocketed twice and strafed five times in March and early April. Guerrilla attacks against the economic infrastructure reached higher levels, as they increasingly targeted power towers, water pumping stations, electrical generators, highways, and productive facilities such as farms and businesses.

In October 1981, in a sophisticated attack displaying better training than they had previously shown, a large guerrilla contingent succeeded in destroying the major Puente de Oro bridge over the Rio Lempa. By that time, the strategy of attacks aimed at targets leading to a rapid popular uprising, as hoped for in the "final offensive," had given way to the attrition and economic starvation inherent in the "prolonged war" concept.

The prolonged war concept was continued in 1982, with two noteworthy

exceptions—the highly sophisticated and successful attack on Salvadoran military aircraft at the Ilopango Airbase early in the year and the nationwide, coordinated, guerrilla offensive against the March 1982 elections, which failed in its goal of preventing the vast majority of voters from going to the polls. In the countryside, the guerrillas were massing, operating in larger numbers, utilizing more sophisticated communications equipment and weaponry and, in isolated areas, conducting operations more typical of a conventional war than a guerrilla conflict. These tactics continued through 1983, a year marked by an attack on the military headquarters of the 4th Brigade in El Paraiso, Chalatenango Department and destruction of the Cuscatlan Bridge on the Pan American Highway in December and January 1984.

Damage Caused by the Guerrillas.

As of early 1983, some of the most fertile land could not be cultivated because of guerrilla attacks. Guerrilla actions had destroyed 55 of the country's 260 bridges and damaged many more. The national water authority had to rebuild 112 water facilities damaged by guerrilla action; 249 attacks on the telephone system caused millions of dollars in damage. In the 22-month period ending November 1982, the guerrillas caused over 5,000 interruptions of electrical power—an average of almost eight a day. The entire eastern region of the country was blacked out for over a third of the year in both 1981 and 1982. The guerrillas destroyed over 200 buses in 1982 alone. Less than half the rolling stock of the railways remained operational by early 1983.

In short, unable to win the uncoerced loyalty of El Salvador's people, the guerrillas set out deliberately and systematically to deprive them of food, water, transportation, light, sanitation, and work.

Continuing Patterns of Nicaraguan Support

Continued Sandinista backing for the FMLN's military strategy consisted of three major components: arms and other logistical supplies, training, and command and control. Levels of material support have fluctuated occasionally. The most notable declines took place during 1981 in the disorganization that briefly followed the defeat of the January offensive and again in late 1983 after the U.S.-Caribbean action in response to the collapse of the New Jewel government in Grenada. This continuing Nicaraguan aid was what allowed the Salvadoran guerrillas to continue their operations on a large scale.

Arms Supplies. With Cuba as a main source,²³ Nicaraguan supplies of arms to FMLN units were stepped up to make possible an offensive to disrupt a peaceful vote in the March 28, 1982, Constituent Assembly elections.

In the first 3 months of 1982, shipments of arms into El Salvador reached the highest overall volume since the "final offensive" in 1981. The Nicaraguan-based arms flow into El Salvador utilized both sea and overland routes through Honduras. In February 1982, for example, a large shipment of arms arrived by sea from Nicaragua to the Usulután coast. Early in March 1982, a guerrilla unit in El Salvador received several thousand sticks of TNT and detonators (five sticks of TNT are sufficient to blow up an electrical pylon).

In addition to small arms and vitally needed ammunition, guerrilla supply operations in 1982 provided greater quantities of heavier weapons, including 57mm recoilless rifles and M-72 antitank

²¹By mid-January 1981, enough information was available to make the Nicaraguan link clear to the Carter Administration, which undertook the private demarches noted in Section III and the Chronology. In an interview with editors of the *Washington Post* published January 30, 1981, newly departed Secretary of State Edmund Muskie said that arms and supplies being used in El Salvador's bloody civil war were flowing through

Nicaragua "certainly with the knowledge and to some extent the help of Nicaraguan authorities."

²²The decision was probably joint. The Salvadorans needed Nicaraguan help. The Sandinistas saw the war in El Salvador as a means of diverting attention from Nicaragua. In that period, Daniel Ortega told Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders that the FMLN was "nuestro escudo"—Nicaragua's "shield." ("Building the Peace in

Central America," *Current Policy No. 414*, U.S. Department of State, August 20, 1982, p. 3).

²³In a Bonn press conference on June 19, 1981, German Social Democratic leader Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski reported that when he had personally confronted Castro with State Department contentions that Cuba had shipped weapons to Salvadoran guerrillas, Castro had admitted it was true.

weapons, thus significantly increasing guerrilla firepower. Individual units also regularly received tens of thousands of dollars for routine commercial purchases of supplies.

On March 15, 1982, the Costa Rican Judicial Police announced the discovery of a house in San Jose with a sizable cache of arms, explosives, uniforms, passports, documents, false immigration stamps from more than 30 countries, and vehicles with hidden compartments—all connected with an ongoing arms traffic through Costa Rican territory to Salvadoran guerrillas. Nine people were arrested: Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, an Argentine, a Chilean, and a Costa Rican. Costa Rican police also seized 13 vehicles designed for arms smuggling. Police confiscated some 150-175 weapons from Mausers to machineguns, TNT, fragmentation grenades, a grenade launcher and ammunition, and 500 combat uniforms. One of the men captured told police that the arms and other goods were to have been delivered to the Salvadoran guerrillas before March 20, "for the elections."²⁴

The flow of supplies from Nicaragua continued at high levels into 1983.

According to Napoleon Romero, formerly the third-ranking member of the largest guerrilla faction in the FMLN who defected in April 1985, his group was receiving up to 50 tons of material every 3 months from Nicaragua before the reduction in deliveries after the U.S.-Caribbean action in Grenada. Romero gave a detailed description of just how the logistics network operated. The first "bridge" implemented for infiltration was an air delivery system. Romero stated that arms would leave Nicaragua, from the area of the Cosiguina Peninsula, for delivery to the coast of San Vicente Department in El Salvador. He described the first such delivery as consisting of 300 weapons infiltrated at the end of 1980 in preparation for the January 1981 "final offensive." Romero claimed that air routes were suspended when the Salvadoran Armed Forces succeeded in capturing a large quantity of arms that came by air from Nicaragua. It was at this point in 1981, he continued, that seaborne delivery became—as it continues to be—the primary method of infiltration.

Romero described the sea route as departing from Nicaragua's Chinandega Department or islands (like La Concha²⁵) off its coast, crossing the Gulf

of Fonseca, and arriving at the coast of El Salvador's Usulután Department. Thousands of rounds of ammunition translate into relatively small numbers of boxes, easily transported by man, animal, or vehicle over multiple routes. The lack of constant government presence, and the relatively short distances from the coastline to all major guerrilla fronts, reduce the difficulties of providing the guerrillas with certain types of logistics support from Nicaragua.²⁶

Training. The Sandinistas also provided training to the Salvadoran insurgents and served as a transit point to other external training locations. Nicaraguan and Cuban political and military training created the basic framework for the use of the arms by the guerrillas within El Salvador. The two countries coordinated the training efforts, with Cuba providing most specialized training for sabotage and demolition operations.²⁷ The Sandinistas, for their part, trained Salvadoran guerrillas in military tactics, weapons

²⁴*La Nacion*, San Jose, March 16-21, 1982.

²⁵In 1983, reporters visiting La Concha found that: "A radio-equipped warehouse and boat facility, disguised as a fishing cooperative on an island in northwestern Nicaragua, has served for three years as a transshipment point for smuggling arms to El Salvador, numerous residents here say." (Sam Dillon, "Base for Ferrying Arms to El Salvador Found in Nicaragua," *Washington Post*, September 21, 1983, p. A29.)

²⁶Guerrillas defecting or captured as late as 1985 stated that the Department of Usulután, especially the area around Jucuarán and the coastline from Isla el Arco to Playa el Cuco, continues to be essential for the distribution and transshipment of materials arriving in El Salvador from Nicaragua. While deliveries by land through Honduras and Guatemala continue, and time-sensitive air deliveries (including essential documents, personnel, and medicines) also take place sporadically, the largest volume of arms, munitions, and materials from Nicaragua arrives by way of the Usulután coastline and interior transit points which lead to all the major guerrilla fronts in El Salvador.

The basic system, which continues into 1985, is as follows: boats or large canoes deliver the materials along the coastline where they are picked up and transported by animals, persons, or small vehicles into the Jucuarán region of southern Usulután to the several dozen guerrilla logistics basecamps. From Jucuarán, the supplies are transported along four major "corridors," within which there are dozens of routes depending on the method of transportation, the presence of Salvadoran security forces, and the weather. These routes lead west out of Jiquilisco-Tres Calles, northwest via Tapesquillo Alto, north to El Brazo, and northeast to Tierra Blanca-Bolívar. All major guerrilla fronts receive supplies through the Usulután logistics network.

Within the Jucuarán area and along the four "corridors" and the dozens of roads, trails, and rivers are located a series of storage facilities, usually natural caves or underground bunkers that have been fortified and concealed. Once materials are off-loaded along the coastline, they seldom remain in one location for more than 72 hours—reflecting both security precautions and the pressing need to sustain FMLN operations.

Napoleon Romero, the former FPL commander, estimated that this supply

infrastructure was able to provide some 20,000-30,000 rounds of ammunition per month for the FPL alone. Some 300 guerrillas could be provided 100 rounds each (the usual load carried by a combatant), or 150 guerrillas could be provided with 200 rounds for a major battle. Such a delivery would weigh about 1,300 pounds and be packaged in about 34 metal boxes which could be easily transported by 15-20 men, six pack animals, or one small pickup truck. Given El Salvador's small size and the short distances involved, material entering along the Usulután coastline could arrive at any of the guerrilla fronts in about 1 week under optimal conditions.

²⁷Cuban Vice-President Carlos Rafael Rodríguez confirmed that Salvadoran guerrillas are trained in Cuba in at least two interviews (*Der Spiegel*, September 28, 1981 and *El Diario de Caracas*, October 29, 1981). The "Nidia Diaz" PRTC documents captured in April 1985 show that the Salvadoran guerrillas continue to receive training throughout the Soviet bloc. (See "Captured Salvadoran Rebel Papers List Training Classes Overseas," *New York Times*, May 21, 1985.)

use, communications, and explosives at temporary training schools scattered around the country and on Sandinista military bases.

Training in Cuba and Nicaragua included rehearsing for attacks on specific targets in El Salvador—including the Puente de Oro Bridge in October 1981, the Ilopango Air Base in January 1982, and the 4th Brigade Headquarters in December 1983. Adin Ingles Alvarado, formerly a commander of the special forces unit of the FPL and a guerrilla from 1977 until his defection this year, recently acknowledged publicly that he and 27 others rehearsed in Cuba the December 30, 1983, attack on the 4th Brigade, making simulated assaults using a mockup of the 4th Brigade garrison constructed from sketches. Ingles also stated that the materiel used in the actual attack—explosives, machineguns, and ammunition—came in via Nicaragua.

Command and Control. As noted above, Salvadoran guerrilla actions were coordinated first by the Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU), then by the FMLN, using a general staff consisting of three members from each of the guerrilla groups active in El Salvador.²⁸

Planning and operations were (and to a large extent continue to be) guided from Managua, where Cuban and Nicaraguan officers provide advice. The guidance is radioed to guerrilla units throughout El Salvador. DRU/FMLN officials coordinate logistical support for the insurgents, including food, medicines, clothing, money and, most

importantly, weapons and ammunition. Although some “free-lancing” takes place in the field as targets of opportunity appear, decisions on locations to be attacked and supply deliveries have generally been coordinated with Managua.²⁹

The FMLN General Command was in Managua from 1981 until late 1983, when the FMLN, in conjunction with Cuban advisers and the Sandinistas, decided that the FMLN military leadership should relocate to El Salvador, in particular to Morazan and Chalatenango Departments. The changes were apparently due to Sandinista desires to maintain a lower profile in their support for the Salvadorans in the wake of the U.S.-Caribbean action in Grenada.

Romero points out that, despite these changes, a “secondary directorate” remains in Managua providing, via radio communications, all the “suggestions” of the Cubans and Sandinistas to the FMLN General Command in El Salvador. In addition to the “secondary directorate,” the Sandinistas and the Cubans have created special logistics organizations in Managua to coordinate arms smuggling.

35 Holding On: 1984-85

The increasing political sophistication and military professionalism of the Salvadoran Armed Forces has forced the guerrillas to forego movement in

large numbers and has impeded their massing for a major attack. In response, they have maintained the assault on the economic infrastructure and have returned to small-group tactics and urban terrorism. Again, their weaponry has improved; use of contact-detonated and command-detonated mines has made guerrilla ambushes, even with relatively few personnel, more lethal and has increased collateral damage to civilians.³⁰

Although the FMLN probably achieved its greatest military strength in late 1983, and thereafter increasingly lost the little popular support it had been able to maintain until then, the guerrillas have continued to operate in 1984 and 1985 as an effective fighting force. Guerrilla numbers may be down to about two-thirds of their 1983 levels. The strategic focus increasingly shifted to acts of terrorism and economic sabotage, as acknowledged by senior guerrilla leaders in recent interviews with the Western press.

Little has changed in the Nicaraguan support system. Although Romero noted that the level of aid dropped after Grenada in October 1983, supplies have continued to come in from the warehouses in Managua. Romero said that his faction still receives about three-quarters of its ammunition supplies from Managua and virtually all its supply of explosives. The Sandinistas continue to control the distribution of the supplies, approving or disapproving the requests from individual guerrilla groups on the basis of the tactical

²⁸Public indications of centralized control come from the guerrillas themselves. On March 14, 1982, the FMLN clandestine *Radio Venceremos* located in El Salvador broadcast a message to guerrillas in El Salvador urging them “to maintain their fighting spirit 24 hours a day to carry out the missions ordered by the FMLN general command” (emphasis added).

²⁹Notes kept by Roberto Roca of the PRTC on meetings in Managua in March 1983 with “Simon,” the pseudonym of the FMLN representative in Managua, refer to talks with the “Sandis” telling them of Salvadoran guerrilla needs and making the Nicaraguans aware of two successful operations in El Salvador—Calle Nueva and La

Esperanza. He states that the Sandinistas encouraged the FMLN to stay in Guazapa, and mentioned that he had presented a logistics plan that was approved. Discussions were held with representatives of the General Command. He observes that “as long as the General Command remains inactive in the interior, it is necessary to participate in this representation at the maximum level, otherwise we would remain ignorant of important decisions and we would lack information of great importance.” In a letter from “Simon” to Roberto Roca, leader of the PRTC, the former discusses the need to communicate with “Fidel” (presumably Fidel Castro) concerning logistics and operational problems with the “Sandinos.”

³⁰Economic damage is now estimated at well over \$1 billion. *Radio Havana* reported on August 27, 1985, that in 1985 alone guer-

rilla action has inflicted \$120 million on the owners of the transport industry and \$20 million on the National Association of Private Industries. In an interview in Perquin, El Salvador, top guerrilla leader Joaquin Villalobos told the Western press that the FMLN “proposes a policy of attacking basic commerce, electrical energy, the roads, with frequent paralyzation of transport, railroad lines, telephone communication, export crops like sugar, cotton and coffee—aimed at breaking the war economy and the regime.” (Quoted by Dan Williams, “Salvadoran War Will Widen, Rebel Warns,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1985.) Guerrilla spokesmen frequently state that 60,000 persons have been killed since 1979. Whatever the number, it is certain that the guerrilla war continues directly to claim many victims and to impede consolidation of political and economic reform.

soundness of their planned operations. Weapons continue to be infiltrated by land and sea.³¹

The Sandinistas also continue to provide training for the Salvadoran guerrillas. From March to June 1984, for example, 100 ERP members received a self-defense course at Cerro Chiribiquira in Leon Department at kilometer 28 on the Old Leon Highway.³² Alfredo Fernandez Flores, an ERP member captured in early August 1985, indicated during his debriefing that Nicaragua continues to provide ERP with combat training. Fernandez said that he spent 15 days in May 1985 in Nicaragua's Matagalpa Department fighting with the Sandinista People's Army (EPS) to gain combat experience. Eight other Salvadorans also participated in this fighting.³³

³¹On August 27, 1985, Salvadoran authorities apprehended a pickup truck entering El Salvador from Honduras at the El Poy checkpoint. The truck was carrying 84 50-round boxes of assorted pistol and rifle ammunition of U.S. manufacture in a concealed compartment.

³²Santos Enrique Garcia, who was a member of ERP in Nicaragua from 1981 until March 1985 and trained in Cuba, was captured by the National Police in July 1985 after he had returned to El Salvador. During Garcia's stay in Nicaragua, the ERP had approximately 150 members in Nicaragua. According to Garcia, as of March 1985, approximately 75 of those members had left the ERP, complaining of poor treatment and a lack of monetary compensation for their work.

³³Debriefing of Alfredo Fernandez Flores, August 1985.

B. Honduras

Immediately after July 1979, the Sandinistas and the Cubans paid little attention to "solidarity" activities in Honduras. Radical leftists in Honduras had never been particularly effective and in 1979 were not yet in a position to carry out serious subversive activities.¹ Honduran territory, however, was, from the start, of primary importance as a transit route for the flow of arms from Nicaragua to the Salvadoran insurgency and, to a lesser extent, to guerrillas active in Guatemala. In 1980 the Sandinistas also began to provide logistical support, training, and advice for the proliferating Honduran factions seeking the violent overthrow of the Honduran Government.

Transfer of Arms to El Salvador and Guatemala

Honduran territory and radical cadres became part of the logistics network for the transfer of arms to Salvadoran insurgents. The operations were done in ways to minimize actions that might provoke the Honduran Government into abandoning the passivity it had previously displayed toward Sandinista operations against Somoza. Indeed, it was some time before the Honduran Government was able to move effectively against the supply routes operating through Honduras.

In January 1981, Honduran authorities made their first major interdiction of supplies headed for the rebels in El Salvador when they discovered the arms trafficking network in the Honduran town of Comayagua.² In April 1981, the Hondurans intercepted a

second shipment in a tractor-trailer. This truck had entered Honduras at the Guasaule crossing from Nicaragua and was apparently heading for Guatemala. Ammunition and propaganda materials were hidden in the side walls of the trailer. The same arms traffickers operated a storehouse in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, with a false floor and a special basement for storing weapons.³

Honduran territory was also the likely conduit for the arms caches captured by Guatemalan security forces at safehouses in Guatemala City in April and July 1981. As with arms captured in January in Honduras, traces made on the serial numbers of individual U.S.-manufactured weapons seized in Guatemala revealed that 17 M-16/AR-15s had originally been shipped to American units in Vietnam. Several of the vehicles captured at the Guatemala City safehouses bore recent customs markings from Nicaragua.⁴

The discoveries pointed to the greater effectiveness of Honduran security operations along the border with Nicaragua. In response, the level and size of arms shipments passing through Honduran territory began to fall off. They did not cease, however. A former guerrilla commander of the Salvadoran People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), Alejandro Montenegro, stated that guerrilla units under his command in 1981-82 received monthly shipments of arms from Nicaragua, mostly via the overland route from Honduras.⁵ More recently, another senior

¹In the November 1981 national elections, the two traditional parties received 96% of the popular vote from a high turnout of 80% of eligible voters (see "Liberal Party in Honduras Takes Big Lead in Vote," *New York Times*, November 30, 1981; "Honduran Victor in Overture to Foes," *New York Times*, December 1, 1981).

²See text and footnote 17, p. 9.

³Intelligence on the first major interdictions of arms shipments by the Honduran security forces was declassified and presented by the Honduran delegation to the XIV Conference of the American Armies in 1981 (see also broadcast by *Radio America*, Tegucigalpa, April 9, 1981, as reported in

FBIS, April 10, 1981.) In May and June 1982 the security forces discovered three more safehouses in Tegucigalpa, including caches of arms believed to have come from the Sandinistas (see State Department unclassified cable *Tegucigalpa* 4821, June 9, 1982).

⁴The discovery of the safehouses was reported by ACAN-EFE, July 21, 1981, *Radio Nuevo Mundo*, Guatemala City, and *Radio-Television Guatemala*, July 21 and 22, 1981, as reported in *FBIS* July 24, 1981.

⁵"A Former Salvadoran Rebel Chief Tells of Arms From Nicaragua," *New York Times*, July 12, 1984, p. A10.

Salvadoran guerrilla leader, Napoleon Romero, confirmed after his defection in April 1985 that Honduras continues to be an important transit route for arms from Nicaragua. His group, the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), brings supplies overland from Nicaragua to Tegucigalpa whence they are transferred to Chalatenango Department in northern El Salvador. He has stated that most shipments now, in contrast to earlier years, are small so as to minimize the danger of discovery.⁶

Armed Struggle: 1981-83

Prospects for vanguard activism in Honduras itself began to change in late 1981 when the country's small Marxist parties fragmented. The splits were often generational in nature and took the form of differences over the road to power. Almost invariably the new younger factions—inspired by Sandinista success—favored armed struggle over the gradual methods favored by the older generation.

By 1981 the Sandinistas were working closely with the new groups. In an October 1981 interview in the pro-government Nicaraguan newspaper *El Nuevo Diario*, the Morazanist Front for the Liberation of Honduras (FMLH), founded in 1979, was described by "Octavio," one of its leaders, as a political-military organization formed as part of the "increasing regionalization of the Central American conflict." On November 17, 1981, the Honduran police raided a safehouse in Tegucigalpa belonging to the Honduran Front for Popular Liberation (FHLP).⁷ Police ultimately captured several members of this group, including a Honduran, a Uruguayan, and several Nicaraguans. The captured terrorists told Honduran

authorities that the Nicaraguan Government had provided them with funds for travel expenses and explosives.

Documents captured in the raid and statements by the detained guerrillas further indicated that:

- The group was formed in Nicaragua at the instigation of high-level Sandinista leaders;
- The group's chief of operations resided in Managua; and
- Members of the group received military training in Nicaragua and Cuba.

The documents included classroom notes from a 1-year training course held in Cuba in 1980. Other documents revealed that guerrillas at one safehouse were responsible for transporting arms and munitions into Honduras from Esteli, Nicaragua.

At no time has there been any attack on Honduran territory from Nicaragua

Nicaraguan Foreign
Ministry Communique
June 22, 1983⁸

During 1981 other "post-Nicaragua" groups made their presence felt. The most formidable was the People's Revolutionary Union/Popular Liberation Movement (URP/MLP). It was more popularly known as the "Cinchoneros." In March 1981 Cinchonero members hijacked a Honduran Airlines flight and diverted it to Managua. Tellingly, they demanded the release of 10 Salvadoran guerrillas who had been captured in Honduras while smuggling arms to the FPL in El Salvador. Sandinista officials refused to cooperate with Honduran

authorities—to the point of refusing them access to the control tower to communicate directly with the hijackers. The Hondurans were forced to accede to the terrorist demands, freeing the Salvadorans and flying them to Cuba.⁹

In September 1982, the Cinchoneros seized control of the Chamber of Commerce in San Pedro Sula (Honduras' second largest city), holding 107 prominent businessmen and three Cabinet ministers hostage. The demand once again centered on the release of captured Salvadorans and other imprisoned guerrillas. The Cinchonero attackers finally ended the hostage incident without achieving any of their demands except safe passage to Cuba on September 28, 1982.¹⁰

Another armed Honduran group, the Popular Revolutionary Forces (FPR), carried out an airplane hijacking on April 28, 1982. They demanded the release of over 50 prisoners but again settled for safe passage to Cuba on May 1, 1982.¹¹ The FPR was also responsible for a number of bombings and attacks on the offices in Honduras of U.S. companies in 1982.¹² On July 4, 1982, they sabotaged the main power station in Tegucigalpa.¹³ In roughly the same time period as the attacks, the FPR was also training cadres in Nicaragua and Cuba for a future "invasion" of Honduras.

Olancho 1983, El Paraiso 1984-85

The extent to which the Sandinistas back subversive movements inside Honduras became apparent when Honduran guerrillas—trained and supplied by Nicaragua and Cuba—attempted to establish guerrilla bases in the Olancho

⁶Debriefing of Napoleon Romero, April and May 1985 (see also "Salvadoran Rebels Change Tactics," *Washington Post*, May 17, 1985; "New Sources Describe Aid to Salvadoran Guerrillas," *Washington Post*, June 8, 1985).

⁷Official *Informe sobre la Captura y Desmantelamiento del Grupo Subversivo Auto-denominado "Frente Hondureño de Liberación Popular,"* Tegucigalpa, December 2, 1981.

⁸As reported by Managua domestic service, *FBIS*, June 23, 1981.

⁹See "Honduran Plane is Hijacked and Lands in Managua," March 28, 1981; "Hostages Released from Honduran Jet," March 29, 1981; and "Panama Plane Will Fly Captives from Honduras," *New York Times*, March 30, 1981.

¹⁰See *Agence France Presse* (AFP), *El Tiempo* (Tegucigalpa), *La Prensa* (San Pedro Sula), *El Heraldo* (Tegucigalpa), ACAN-EFE, as reported in *FBIS*, September 22-24, 1982.

¹¹An extremely detailed account of the hijacking, including government and guerrilla statements, as reported by *Radio Cadena Audio Video*, Tegucigalpa, AFP, and ACAN-EFE, is reported in *FBIS*, April 29-May 3, 1982 (see also "Hijackers Release Hostages, Fly to Cuba," *New York Times*, May 2, 1982).

¹²For the company bombings, see State Department unclassified cable *Tegucigalpa* 6502, August 6, 1982. The cable provides a translation of the FPR communique claiming credit for the attacks on the U.S. firms.

¹³For the July 4 bombing, see State Department unclassified cable *Tegucigalpa* 5564, July 7, 1982; see also broadcast by *Cadena Audio Video*, Tegucigalpa, July 11, 1982, as reported in *FBIS*, July 12, 1982.

Department of Honduras in 1983 and in El Paraiso in 1984.¹⁴

The two Honduran groups involved in the attempted "invasions" were the Honduran branch of the Central American Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRTC) and the aforementioned FPR. The PRTC was then led by Jose Maria Reyes Mata, a radical activist since the 1960s who had accompanied "Che" Guevara on his ill-fated adventure in Bolivia.¹⁵ In April 1980, in the month when Honduras was holding democratic elections for a constituent congress, Reyes Mata was arrested in connection with a wave of pre-election violence and the kidnaping of a Texaco executive. He was freed after a general amnesty decree and moved to Nicaragua later the same year.

Once in Nicaragua, Reyes Mata began planning to open a front inside Honduras with Sandinista support. In 1981 he conducted an active recruitment campaign inside Honduras, and the first recruits departed via Managua for military training in Cuba. The trainees returned to Nicaragua in late 1982 and early 1983 and fought alongside Sandinista army units against the Nicaraguan resistance to gain combat experience.

In July 1983, Reyes Mata and his 96-man force, armed by the Sandinistas, entered the isolated and underpopulated Department of Olancho in eastern Honduras. The operation was structured as a vanguard action for other groups. The other forces were never infiltrated,

however. The "invasion" was foiled by Honduran security forces, and Reyes Mata was killed. Many of the participants captured by the Honduran Army gave detailed descriptions of their training in both Nicaragua and Cuba.

In July 1984, a similar effort was made to establish the base for a rural insurgency with the attempted infiltration of 19 FPR guerrillas into the El Paraiso Department along the border between the two countries. As was the case with the Olancho group, the FPR cadre received training at Pinar del Rio in Cuba and afterward trained in Nicaragua fighting the armed opposition to the Sandinistas. Again the operation was contained by the Honduran Army. Afterward, members of the group led Honduran authorities to several arms caches and subversive groups in the Comayagua area.

In April 1985, the Sandinistas were again caught trying to provide support for the Honduran guerrilla groups, but this time the operatives arrested were Nicaraguans. Between April 11-14, seven Nicaraguans were arrested in El Paraiso Department trying to infiltrate arms to Cinchoneros based in Olancho Department. One of them was a member of the Nicaraguan Directorate of State Security (DGSE) who stated that he had coordinated similar arms infiltrations since November 1984.¹⁶

The leadership of Honduran guerrilla groups continues to reside in Nicaragua,

and U.S. intelligence reports current training of Honduran guerrillas in Managua.

Intimidation

The Sandinista government, in addition to supporting subversive movements inside Honduras, has engaged in a campaign apparently devised to intimidate the Honduran Government and keep it from effectively controlling its borders.

Border incursions by the Sandinistas have soured relations between the two countries almost from the moment Somoza fell in July 1979. The first of nearly 300 border incidents through mid-1985 occurred on July 22, 1979—3 days after the Sandinistas entered Managua.¹⁷ Before the year was out, there were at least a dozen more incidents. While the early missions were usually characterized by small units operating with light weaponry, by 1985 the Sandinistas were employing 120mm mortar rounds. Heavy shelling from Nicaraguan territory by rockets and heavy artillery has also occurred.

The Sandinistas, in addition, have placed antipersonnel land mines along both sides of the Honduran/Nicaraguan border. Although the mines are justified by the Sandinistas as self-defense against incursions by Nicaraguan resistance forces, the net effect is to endanger the resident rural population in the border areas. In June 1983, two American journalists were killed when their car hit a Czechoslovakian-manufactured mine on a Honduran road.¹⁸

¹⁴Most of the information on the two operations was provided by defectors and/or captured guerrillas. (For Olancho, see State Department unclassified cable *Tegucigalpa* 10769, October 11, 1983. See also "Honduran Army Defeats Cuban-Trained Rebel Unit," *Washington Post*, November 22, 1983. For El Paraiso, see statement made by Department of National Investigation as broadcast by *Voz de Honduras*, Tegucigalpa, October 29, 1984, as reported in *FBIS*, November 1, 1984. See Appendix 3. Also see detailed unclassified account released in November 1984 by the U.S. Southern Command, *Cuban-Nicaraguan Support for Subversion in Honduras: El Paraiso, July 1984*.)

¹⁵The PRTC is a regional group with branches in several countries. A history of the connections between the various factions is given in an undated "Brief Historical Overview of the PRTC," captured on April 18, 1985, by Salvadoran security forces, which states that by 1979 "the PRTC had developed an organized structure in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica." The Salvadoran branch of the PRTC was responsible for the June 19, 1985, attack on a sidewalk cafe in San Salvador which left six Americans and seven Latin Americans dead (see *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, late June 1985, *passim*). On Jose Reyes Mata's 1980 arrest, see ACAN-EFE, Tegucigalpa, May 8, 1980, and

statement by public relations department of the Public Security Forces, May 9, 1980, as reported by *FBIS*, May 12, 1980.

¹⁶State Department unclassified cable *Tegucigalpa* 6152, May 8, 1985.

¹⁷*Incidentes Protagonizados por La Republica de Nicaragua en Perjuicio de Honduras*, annual reports from 1982 onwards. Also *Resumen de las Principales Actividades del Ejercito Popular Sandinista en la Frontera con Honduras desde Enero 1984 hasta 1 Junio 1985*, Estado Mayor Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (Honduran Armed Forces).

¹⁸News Conference by Foreign Minister Edgardo Paz Barnica, broadcast June 22, 1983, as reported by *FBIS* the same day.

C. Costa Rica

Costa Rican support was essential to the success of the struggle against Somoza. In November 1978, the Costa Rican Government severed diplomatic relations with the Somoza regime and over the next 8 months allowed Costa Rican territory to be used as a conduit for arms and supplies to the anti-Somoza war effort on its northern border.

In the process of aiding the insurrection, however, Costa Rica's stable democracy unwittingly opened the door to future troubles directly related to the Sandinistas. The Sandinistas' disdain for what Defense Minister Humberto Ortega referred to as a "bourgeois democracy in the hands of the rich," soon made itself apparent.¹ Costa Rican territory was used to transfer weapons to the Salvadoran rebels, and groups inside Costa Rica were armed and given military training. Terrorism became a persistent problem from 1981 on, and Nicaraguan opponents of the Sandinistas became targets of assassination attempts. Tensions with Nicaragua increased in general with the growth of internal opposition to the Sandinistas and recurring border incidents.

Early Ties to the Sandinistas

Costa Rica has long accepted the democratic participation of socialist and Marxist parties in its political life.² With

the advent of the Sandinista regime in Managua in July 1979, however, the tactical allegiance to democracy of some of the radical groups in Costa Rica began to shift. A peaceful political process could no longer be taken for granted.

The orthodox Communist Party in Costa Rica, then called the Popular Vanguard Party (PVP) and led by Manuel Mora Valverde, contributed cadres to Sandinista units to fight against Somoza and to accelerate the

In 40 years of Somocismo, we never had the threat that we have in 4 years of Sandinismo.

Luis Alberto Monge,
President of Costa Rica
December 1983³

PVP's military preparedness in the event conflict broke out later in Costa Rica.⁴ By early 1979, the PVP had several hundred combatants in Nicaragua.

The PVP maintained its force in Nicaragua after the Sandinistas came to power. Major elements of it remain there today and provide permanent training for paramilitary cadres who return to Costa Rica. The unit did not act in isolation. From the start, it maintained close contact with the Sandinista

army and over the years became an integral part of Sandinista defenses along the border with Costa Rica. The Nicaraguan Government supplies the unit with training, uniforms, arms, and food, and in return, the unit carries out military actions against Nicaraguan resistance forces operating along the Nicaragua-Costa Rica border.

Arming for the Revolution

While Panama and Venezuela were providing aid to the anti-Somoza opposition through Costa Rica in 1979, Cuba—with the aid of corrupt Costa Rican officials—established its own clandestine arms supply network for the Sandinistas. This network was later used to supply the Salvadoran insurgency and internal Costa Rican leftist groups.

The circumstances surrounding these shipments were established by a special commission created in June 1980 by the Costa Rican legislature to investigate charges then circulating that after the Nicaraguan civil war, a black market had developed in connection with war materiel left behind in Costa Rica.⁵ During the course of its investigation, the commission discovered the shipments from Cuba. Then-President Rodrigo Carazo of Costa Rica first denied that the flights had occurred when questioned by the commission on November 4, 1980, but later admitted them. On March 25, 1981, five Costa Rican pilots publicly admitted their participation in

¹Humberto Ortega, Secret Speech, reproduced in *La Nación*, San Jose, October 10, 1981. Among other things, he observed that "the Costa Ricans . . . very intelligently have maintained [but softened] the exploitation of man by man . . . [T]hat is the kind of democracy [our opposition] wants . . . that we the Sandinistas be like the left in Costa Rica—a group which mobilizes politically and puts out its own newspaper but where the bourgeoisie controls power."

²The Costa Rican Marxist left is made up of several parties, foremost of which is the Costa Rican People's Party headed by Mora Valverde. Until 1984 his party was known as the Popular Vanguard Party (PVP). In 1948 military cadres of the PVP supported the unsuccessful efforts by the incumbent government to thwart the outcome of democratic elections (see Ralph L. Woodward, *Central*

America: A Nation Divided, New York, 1976, pp. 223-224). For the 1978 and 1982 elections, the radical parties formed coalitions in an effort to expand their representation at the national level. They received 7.3% of the vote in 1978 and less than 4% in 1982 (see Harold D. Nelson, ed., *Costa Rica: A Country Study*, Washington, 1984, pp. 216-218).

³Georgie Anne Geyer, "Taking the Sandinistas at Their Word," *Wall Street Journal*, August 23, 1985, p. 15.

⁴Many scattered reports confirm the brigade's presence in Nicaragua. In 1982 a newspaper article referred to 700 Costa Rican leftists training in Nicaragua (*La Republica*, Panama City, February 7, 1982, as reported in *FBIS*, February 9, 1982). A former Nicaraguan official, who defected in July 1985, recently gave details on a group of PVP militants being trained in Nicaragua during 1983. One of the Hondurans captured in connection with the infiltration of El Paraiso in July 1984 spoke of training with a PVP cadre in the "internationalist" brigade

in 1983. In March 1985, *La Republica* in San Jose ran a story of 100 Costa Ricans training in Cuba and Nicaragua and quoted Security Minister Benjamin Piza as saying "we have always heard of the possibility that there are groups harboring such a line of operation. We will do everything possible to neutralize them" (see *La Republica*, San Jose, March 14, 1985, as reported by *FBIS*, March 25, 1985). In May 1985, *La Nación* in San Jose quoted MRP leader Sergio Erik Ardon that "there are presently Costa Ricans fighting at the side of the Sandinista forces, just as there are in the counterrevolutionary groups."

⁵Report on arms trafficking issued by a special Costa Rican legislative commission on May 14, 1981. The report is the basis for the following comments (*La Nación*, May 15, 1981, as reported by *FBIS*, June 2, 1981). Also see "Arms Scandal is Charged in Costa Rica," *New York Times*, May 21, 1981.

the transshipment of arms from Cuba and gave details of the operations and the names of the Cuban and Costa Rican officials involved in supervising the clandestine flights.⁶ The commission established that at least 21 such flights had been made, most of the shipments arriving at a secondary airport, in Liberia, removed from public scrutiny.

Many of the weapons flown in by the Cuban airlift were diverted to the insurgency in El Salvador. The pilots, in their March 25 statement, recalled that on one of the trips to Cuba, Manuel Pineiro of the Cuban Communist Party's America Department asked whether they would be willing to fly arms to El Salvador.⁷ The legislative commission traced three shipments to El Salvador through Costa Rican territory in 1980 and 1981.

Importantly for the Costa Ricans, the commission confirmed that a substantial number of these weapons remained in Costa Rica after the fall of Somoza. The Minister of Public Security in 1979 was Juan Jose Echeverria Brealey—a man with close ties to Cuba and now the leader of the Radical Democratic Party. The commission in its May 1981 report held Echeverria responsible for the fact that “there were no controls over the war materiel that entered the country” and for the “disappearance” of war materiel from state arsenals, including 2,018 firearms.

The commission concluded that the imported weapons had been widely distributed inside Costa Rica. It reported that “weapons of war” had been confiscated from various private homes, including properties owned by Echeverria. Nine months later, on March 25, 1982, another cache of arms was found in the house of Mora Valverde, the leader of the PVP. At the time of the seizures, he claimed that the weapons were for “self-defense.”⁸

The supply network, once in place, continued to operate for some time after the air shipments from Cuba had ceased. In March 1982, Costa Rican security forces raided a safehouse in San Jose, arresting nine persons, including two Nicaraguans, in connection with an arms trafficking operation to El Salvador. About 175 weapons were seized, including 70 M-16s, 50 of which were traceable as rifles originally shipped to Vietnam.⁹

Terrorism: 1981-85

The new orientation of Costa Rican radical groups helped set off a wave of violence inside the country over the next few years. Many of the terrorist acts, however, were attributable to external forces. While hiding behind a screen of legitimate international relations, Nicaragua took actions which were clearly meant to intimidate the Costa Rican Government.

The initial terrorist act took place in March 1981: an attack on a vehicle car-

rying a Costa Rican driver and three U.S. Embassy security guards. It was followed in June 1981 by the killings of three policemen and a taxi driver. Both attacks were traced to a radical splinter group from the Marxist People's Revolutionary Movement (now known as the New Republic Movement), whose leader—Sergio Erik Ardon—has close ties to Cuba and Nicaragua and who at the time of the attacks stated that the terrorism could be explained, if not justified, in terms of the injustices of Costa Rican society. Ardon was the only Costa Rican political leader not to condemn the attacks as terrorism.¹⁰

Actions more clearly linked to external support followed.

- Six armed persons—including Nicaraguans affiliated with the Sandinistas—were arrested in July 1981 crossing the Nicaraguan border into Costa Rica on a mission to seize the Guatemalan Embassy in San Jose and demand the release by Guatemala of convicted terrorists.¹¹

- On January 19, 1982, two Salvadoran PRTC members—Jose Marroquin and Jonathan Rodriguez—were arrested in Costa Rica in connection with an attempted kidnaping of a Salvadoran businessman. They later told Costa Rican police that they passed first through Nicaragua, where they and others were provided with false identity documents to enter Costa Rica. Marro-

⁶ACAN-EFE, March 24, 1981, as reported in *FBIS*, March 26, 1981. During the months leading up to the overthrow of Somoza in July 1979, a group of officers of the America Department of the Cuban Communist Party played a major role in the Nicaraguan revolution. A number of America Department officers were assigned to Costa Rica and were responsible for moving arms and men into Nicaragua from Costa Rica. This group was headed by Julian Lopez Diaz, a senior intelligence officer, who became Cuba's Ambassador to Nicaragua less than 2 weeks after Somoza's fall. Lopez and his associates moved freely throughout Costa Rica during this period, thanks to safe-

conduct passes issued them by Minister of Public Security Juan Jose Echeverria Brealey.

⁷It became public knowledge that, with Cuban financial support and guidance and assistance from Fernando Comas, an America Department officer assigned as a consular official in Costa Rica, the Chilean Fernando Carrasco (a member of Chile's Movement of the Revolutionary Left—MIR) became the leading figure in a sophisticated air support operation to provide arms and ammunition to insurgents in El Salvador. By virtue of his position as the head of several air express companies, including one based in Costa Rica, Carrasco handled logistical details for supply missions. Carrasco initially based his operation in Costa Rica and later changed the venue to Nicaragua.

⁸Nelson, op. cit., p. 254. The police found firearms, dynamite, and fragmentation grenades in his possession.

⁹*La Nacion*, San Jose, March 16-21, 1982, *passim*.

¹⁰The activities of the group attracted considerable media coverage in Costa Rica. For details on the police investigation of the group, see broadcasts of *Radio Reloj*, San Jose, as reported in *FBIS*, June-August 1981, *passim*. The terrorists had connections to Uruguayan Tupamaros, Cinchoneros, and the FMLN.

¹¹*Radio Reloj*, San Jose, July 6, 1981, as reported in *FBIS*, July 8, 1981.

quin told a Costa Rican court on February 4, 1982, that he "received military and political training" during the several months he spent in Nicaragua.¹²

- In November of the same year, members of the Costa Rican branch of the PRTC seriously wounded a Japanese businessman—who later died—in a botched kidnaping attempt. Two Salvadorans, a Honduran, and two Costa Ricans were arrested in connection with the attempted kidnaping.¹³

- Three Nicaraguan Embassy officials were expelled from Costa Rica on July 28, 1982, for their involvement in the July 4 bombing of the San Jose offices of SAHSA, the Honduran national airline. Costa Rica's investigation of the case implicated a Colombian terrorist recruited by Nicaraguan Embassy officials in Costa Rica. One of the three Nicaraguan diplomats was arrested at a clandestine meeting with the Colombian.¹⁴

- Terrorist actions on Costa Rican soil peaked in 1982 but did not end. Members of the New Republic Movement were responsible for a major bank robbery in Guanacaste Province in February 1985. When they were arrested, they were found to have collected information on the movements of U.S. Embassy personnel in Costa Rica as well as those of Costa Rican officials and other foreign diplomats.¹⁵

Attacks on Nicaraguans in Costa Rica

Much of the terrorism experienced by Costa Rica was directed at elements of the Nicaraguan opposition who have sought refuge in Costa Rica. In February 1982, an attempt was made to assassinate Fernando Chamorro, formerly a prominent anti-Somocista, now an anti-Sandinista.¹⁶ The principal suspect in the case was the Nicaraguan consul in the town of Liberia, but by the time police sought him out, he had returned to Nicaragua. On October 6, 1982, an Argentine associated with the Nicaraguan opposition was kidnaped off the streets in Costa Rica. He later appeared on Nicaraguan television for a public "confession." He was never heard from again.¹⁷

In April 1983, a Basque terrorist infiltrated from Nicaragua was arrested in connection with a plot to kill Eden Pastora, a former Sandinista commander.¹⁸ On June 29, 1983, one FSLN member was killed and another Nicaraguan injured in San Jose when a bomb they intended for the opposition leaders exploded prematurely.¹⁹ In November 1984, an attempt was made on the life of another opposition leader, Alfonso Robelo, with a fragmentation grenade.²⁰

Attempted Intimidation

Not surprisingly, Costa Rica's relations with Nicaragua, Cuba, and the Soviet Union deteriorated after 1979. Consular relations with Cuba were severed in May 1981. In November 1982, the

Monge administration asked Moscow to withdraw 17 of the 25 officials at its Embassy in San Jose. The Soviets had been active promoting labor strife inside Costa Rica since 1979.²¹

In the case of Nicaragua, approximately 90 incidents involving diplomatic protests were recorded before Costa Rica ordered Nicaragua, on February 19, 1985, to reduce its Embassy personnel from 47 to 10.²² The Sandinista attempts to intimidate the Costa Rican Government began as early as 1980, 2 years before former Sandinista Eden Pastora began his armed resistance to the regime on its southern borders. In October 1980, Sandinista forces fired on Costa Rican vessels engaged in medical missions on the San Juan River, which partially divides the two countries. In 1982 Nicaragua's challenge to Costa Rica's rights on the San Juan became more sustained, and in June and July 1982 several tourist boats on the river were intercepted. In 1983 units of the EPS began regular incursions into Costa Rican territory.

The seriousness of the incidents between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, if anything, has deepened this year. On May 31, 1985, a Costa Rican Civil Guard unit on border patrol was fired on by Sandinista army troops; two guards were killed and nine were injured. Sandinista units continued to bombard the area well after their unprovoked attack, making it difficult to retrieve the bodies.²³

¹²State Department unclassified cable *San Jose* 5710, August 23, 1982.

¹³Broadcast by *Radio Reloj*, San Jose, November 9, 1982, as reported in *FBIS*, November 10, 1982. Also see State Department unclassified cable *San Jose* 7701, November 12, 1982.

¹⁴Broadcast by *Radio Reloj*, San Jose, July 28, 1982, as reported in *FBIS*, July 29, 1982; also included in *Calendario de Incidentes Entre el Gobierno de Costa Rica y el Gobierno de Nicaragua*, February 1985.

¹⁵Classified diplomatic correspondence.

¹⁶State Department unclassified cable *San Jose* 4835, June 23, 1984.

¹⁷*La Nacion*, San Jose, various stories October-December 1982.

¹⁸"Cien Etraras en Nicaragua," *Cambio* 16, Madrid, October 3, 1983, p. 22.

¹⁹"Bomb Kills Nicaraguan in Costa Rica," *Washington Post*, June 30, 1983, p. A35.

²⁰See President Monge's condemnation of the attack as recorded by *Radio Impacto*, San Jose, November 5, 1984, as reported by *FBIS*, November 8, 1984.

²¹For the break with the Soviets and the Cubans see Nelson, op. cit., pp. 238-239.

²²The downgrading of relations with the Sandinistas was precipitated by the violation of the immunity of Costa Rica's Embassy in Managua on December 24, 1984, when a Nicaraguan citizen was abducted from Embassy grounds (see *Calendario de Incidentes* cited in footnote 14 on this page).

²³The incident received international media coverage and was considered serious enough by the OAS to merit an investigation.