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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

20 October 1981

MEMORANDUM

[Redacted]

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Nicaraguan Support for Central American Revolutionaries

[Redacted]

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The Sandinistas remain fully committed to the Salvadoran insurgency and are increasingly willing to acknowledge their support. [Redacted]

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Nicaragua continues to channel arms to El Salvador via land, sea, and air routes, shifting traffic according to the circumstances of the moment. Because of overland interdiction efforts by Honduran authorities, the Sandinistas are stepping up deliveries by air and probably by sea as well. [Redacted]

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While the ongoing supply effort appears to be sufficient to sustain the level of guerrilla activity that has prevailed since February, we believe it would have to be increased significantly to support a major insurgent offensive. With the onset of the dry season next month, Managua probably will step up its arms deliveries. [Redacted]

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This memorandum, covering the period from 12 June 1981 to 19 October 1981, was requested by the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. It was prepared by [Redacted] Middle America-Caribbean Division, Office of African and Latin American Analysis, and coordinated with the Clandestine Service. Questions and comments should be directed to Chief, Middle America-Caribbean Division, OALA, [Redacted]

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[redacted] In addition, Nicaragua is sending small numbers of military advisers to El Salvador and continues to train Salvadoran insurgents. The Sandinistas also may be supporting training camps for Salvadoran revolutionaries in northern Costa Rica. [redacted]

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Managua continues to provide arms and other support to Guatemalan insurgents, and has increased its assistance to Honduran leftists in preparation for armed struggle. Perhaps as many as 400 Hondurans have been undergoing training in Sandinista Army camps during the past year, and some are being infiltrated into Honduras to set up cells in both rural and urban areas. In addition, Nicaragua is collaborating with Cuba in helping organize a new Costa Rican political party with a paramilitary capability. [redacted]

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Sandinista Commitment

The Sandinistas are convinced that a leftist victory in El Salvador is essential to the security of their own regime and probably doubt that the US would resume economic assistance to Nicaragua even if they halted their support activities. Thus, Managua believes it has strong reasons--and little disincentive--for continuing its involvement in El Salvador. [redacted]

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The Sandinista regime now is less inclined to conceal its complicity. Last month, [redacted] stated to foreign diplomats that Nicaragua would not halt its assistance to the Salvadoran insurgents. In recent weeks, the Sandinistas have publicly reaffirmed their commitment to the insurgency and have begun to glorify "Che" Guevara as a symbol of "internationalism"--perhaps to prepare the public for increased efforts on behalf of the Salvadoran left. [redacted]

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El Salvador

Managua continues to channel arms to El Salvador by land, sea, and air. Weapons reportedly are stockpiled under Sandinista Army control on Nicaragua's east coast; Salvadoran guerrillas who operate the network within Nicaragua then move the arms to forward positions for transshipment to El Salvador. Sandinista National Directorate member Bayardo Arce is said to be personally in charge of support activities. A farm--owned by the Nicaraguan government--near Jalapa reportedly serves as a major base for the overland traffic through Honduras. Other information indicates that, in Nicaragua during July, there was an increase in the

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preparation of vehicles with concealment cavities for delivery of weapons and explosives to El Salvador. Additional vehicles are loaded with arms from stockpiles in Costa Rica and transit Nicaragua with the collaboration of Sandinista security officials.

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At least three Salvadoran insurgent groups, supported by Honduran leftists, operate separate arms-distribution networks in Honduras. These networks maintain caches of weapons infiltrated from Nicaragua and later transfer them to El Salvador

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A major network, which transports weapons from caches in the Danli area, temporarily suspended shipments in late September but now plans to resume operations soon.

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Air deliveries, deemphasized for several months, have been stepped up. By September, most weapons deliveries were being made by parachute, due in part to the success of Honduran authorities in intercepting land shipments.

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the commander of the Sandinista Air Force is directly involved in the arms flights and reports to Defense Minister Humberto Ortega on support activities. There have been increased sightings of unidentified aircraft in Salvadoran guerrilla zones--including one sighting of a small plane dropping bundles--over the past two months

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Seaborne shipments may also be increasing. In July, a captured guerrilla told Salvadoran authorities that he had participated in night deliveries of arms from Nicaragua to Montecristo Island in El Salvador. Three additional reports confirm the flow of weapons across the Gulf of Fonseca, and an

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provides further evidence of clandestine travel by sea along the Pacific Coast.

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According to a new route from Nicaragua's east coast to the Honduran north coast was being planned last July. Honduran Communist Party members are to receive the arms shipments and transport them to the Salvadoran border for delivery to Salvadoran insurgents. Cuba reportedly is furnishing communications equipment to support the operation.

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Havana also operates a number of mobile communications-intercept vans along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border to facilitate the movement of arms and monitor military activities in Honduras. In addition, a permanent unit on the north slope of the Cosiguina volcano in Nicaragua is targeted against Salvadoran and Honduran military communications as well as ship movements in the Gulf of Fonseca. [redacted]

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Despite Nicaraguan efforts, the Salvadoran guerrillas continue to experience serious problems of food and munitions resupply. The arms pipeline apparently is delivering enough to sustain the level of guerrilla activity that has prevailed since February, but significantly larger quantities would be necessary to support a major insurgent offensive. Managua probably will step up its shipments with the onset of the dry season next month. [redacted]

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Although Cuba and the USSR have facilitated the supply of weapons smuggled to the Salvadoran revolutionaries, Libya apparently is taking a larger role. According to [redacted] the Libyan government intended in August to step up its financial and military assistance to the Salvadorans through the Nicaraguan Ambassador in Tripoli. Moreover, Panamanian National Guard G-2 Noriega reportedly told Salvadoran junta President Duarte in mid-September that Libya had been supplying arms to the guerrillas via Nicaragua for two months. [redacted]

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In addition to channeling arms to El Salvador, the Sandinistas now are sending advisers. In late August, 25 Sandinista Army officers reportedly infiltrated by land routes to serve as instructors to the Salvadoran guerrillas. Since four had received special training in parachute delivery systems, they probably will be involved in receiving arms shipments as well. Another group of Army personnel--including five former members of Defense Minister Ortega's personal security staff--reportedly were sent last July. A Salvadoran soldier held captive by insurgents in El Salvador later reported that a Nicaraguan officer was killed during a government sweep operation early this month.

[redacted] Nicaraguan military personnel are again being asked to volunteer for duty in El Salvador. [redacted]

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[redacted] indicates that additional Nicaraguans or other "internationalists" continue to arrive in El Salvador. [redacted]

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Guatemala

Nicaragua is continuing its assistance to Guatemalan insurgents as well. A captured Guatemalan guerrilla told [redacted] authorities last June that the Nicaraguan government was collaborating with his organization in arms supply. In addition, we have an unconfirmed report that Sandinista commander Eden Pastora--whose departure from Nicaragua last July was well publicized--intends to join the insurgents in Guatemala. [redacted]

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According to [redacted] Managua also provides transit for Guatemalan leftists going to Cuba and East Europe for paramilitary training. In June, [redacted] substantiated these reports by stating that they had traveled via Nicaragua when returning from a training stint in Cuba. [redacted]

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We have no further information on arms trafficking through Belize, but [redacted] leaders of one of the principal Guatemalan guerrilla organizations anticipate that the independence of Belize will facilitate their insurgency. The guerrillas believe that the Belizean government will be either sympathetic to them or unable to halt the infiltration of arms and personnel through its territory. [redacted]

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Honduras

While Honduras continues to serve primarily as a conduit for arms to El Salvador, the Sandinistas have stepped up their assistance to Honduran leftists in preparation for armed struggle.

According to [redacted] three Cuban- and Nicaraguan-trained guerrillas were apprehended last July when returning to Honduras. The captured leftists stated that numerous insurgents have been infiltrated since December 1980 to set up rural and urban cells, which are to be supplied from Nicaragua, and that guerrilla operations are to commence early next year. [redacted]

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One of the captured leftists claimed to be personally aware of 40 Hondurans training in Sandinista Army facilities and estimated the total number at 400. Interrogation of another guerrilla revealed that members of a group responsible for several terrorist acts earlier this year also trained in Nicaragua. Moreover, [redacted] the largest Honduran insurgent organization in July chose about 20 individuals to travel to Nicaragua for terrorist training.

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The Sandinistas also continue to provide transit for Honduran leftists en route to training courses in Cuba and other Socialist countries. [REDACTED]

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According to [REDACTED] the Sandinista leadership in August offered \$50,000 to the Communist Party of Honduras for the purchase of arms and equipment, and agreed to locate a forged-documents laboratory in Nicaragua. In addition, a Nicaraguan intelligence officer in Tegucigalpa maintains contact with--and provides operational assistance to--the Honduran extreme left. [REDACTED]

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Costa Rica

The Sandinistas also are increasingly active in Costa Rica. Three separate sources have reported the existence of training camps for leftist guerrillas--probably to be infiltrated into El Salvador--in northern Costa Rica. Arms and other supplies reportedly arrive by air and sea from Nicaragua to support the camps. According to a [REDACTED] additional arms--presumably from Cuba--enter Costa Rica by sea from Panama. Some of the weapons stored in caches probably will be shipped to El Salvador, and some will remain in the hands of local leftists. [REDACTED]

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Apparently Cuba and Nicaragua are preparing for a gradual increase in leftist capabilities in Costa Rica. Another [REDACTED] reports that former security chief Echeverria is organizing a political party with a paramilitary capability. Havana is providing funds and has pledged training and arms. Top Sandinista officials have promised their full support, including the provision of Western-made weapons now in Nicaraguan inventories. [REDACTED]

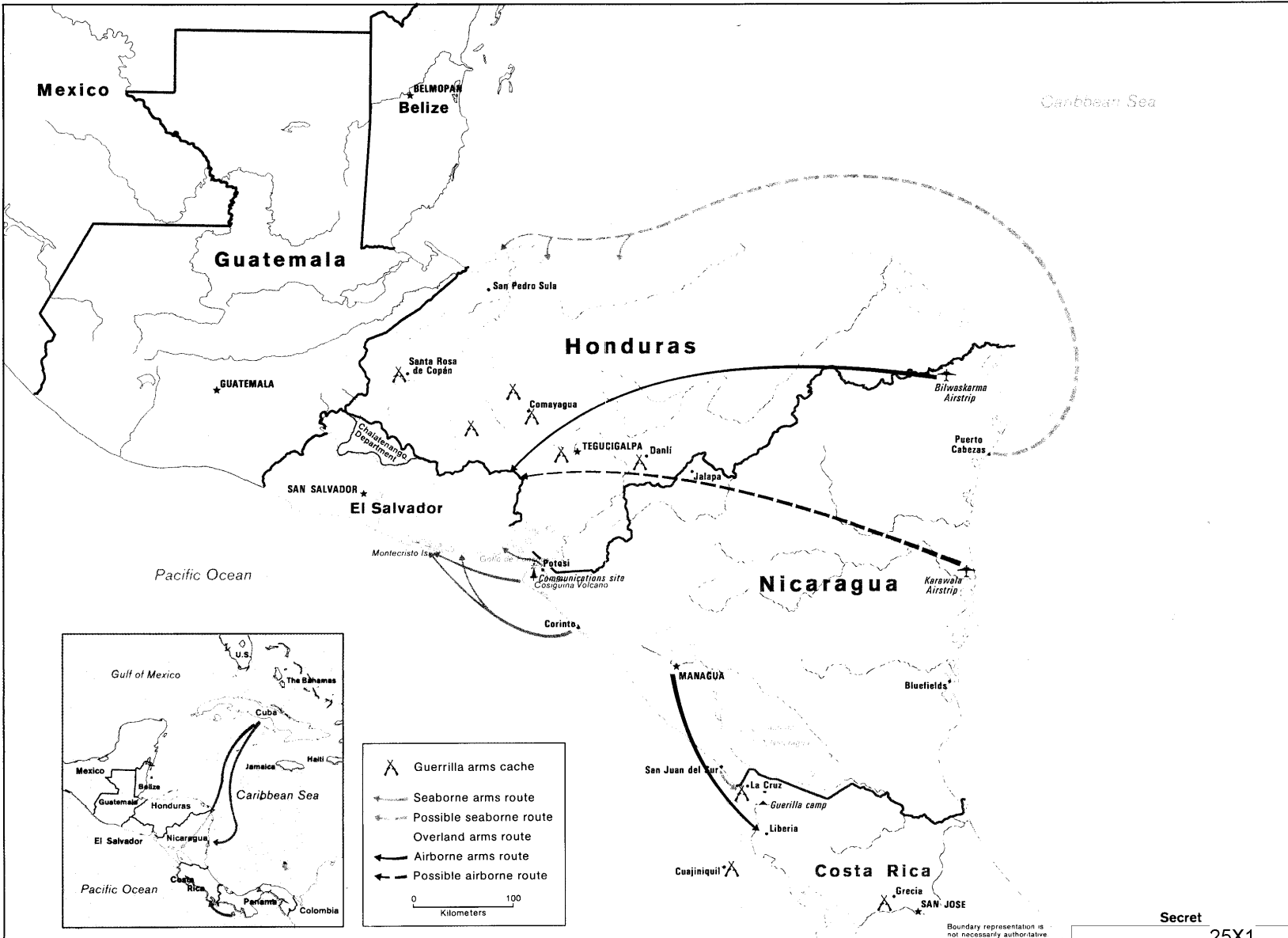
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Major Central American Arms Routes



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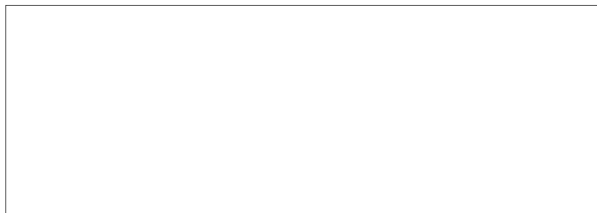
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MEMORANDUM FOR: DCI

Mr. Casey:

We have shown this memo to Admiral Nance, Roger Fontaine, Lt. Gen. Gorman, Bing West, and Tom Enders. Because of the danger of leaks, all copies have been retrieved after reading.

Admiral Nance has asked that the memo be made available to the NSPG. Dewey Clarridge, however, remains concerned about source protection and the sensitivity of the information. You might consider briefing from the memo if the subject comes up rather than making copies available.



Date 23 October 1981

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