



Nicaragua: Export of Subversion to El Salvador\*

In El Salvador, during the early part of 1982, the Salvadoran FMLN guerrillas numbered about 5,000 full time fighters and an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 part time activists who provided logistical and political as well as combat services. The FMLN headquarters in Nicaragua had by then evolved into an extremely sophisticated command and control center -- in fact, this system is more elaborate than that used by the Sandinistas against Somoza. Planning and operations are guided from this headquarters in Nicaragua, where Cuban and Nicaraguan officers are involved in command and control. The guidance flows to guerrilla units widely spread throughout El Salvador. FMLN headquarters coordinates logistical support for the insurgents to include food, medicines, clothing, money -- and most importantly -- weapons and ammunition. Although some spontaneous guerrilla actions continue as targets of opportunity appear, the headquarters in Nicaragua decides on locations to be attacked and coordinates supply deliveries. Evidence of centralized control also comes from the Salvadoran guerrillas themselves. On March 14, 1982 the FMLN clandestine Radio Venceremos then 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 supplied)."

In December 1981, Fidel Castro directed, after meetings in Havana with Salvadoran guerrilla leaders, that external supplies of arms to FMLN units should be stepped up to make possible an offensive to disrupt any chance for a peaceful vote in the March 1982 elections. Extreme leftist groups throughout Central America were mobilized to support the effort.

\*These are excerpts from  
the February 1983 FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY  
compendium--ALA said this was  
the best

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During the first three months of 1982, shipments of arms into El Salvador surged. During the past several years, we have closely monitored the deliveries of arms to the Salvadoran insurgents. The recent Cuban-Nicaraguan arms flow into El Salvador has emphasized sea, air and -- once again -- overland routes through Honduras. Early in March 1982, for example, a guerrilla unit in El Salvador received several thousand sticks of TNT and detonators (only five sticks of TNT are sufficient to blow up an electrical pylon). In February 1982, a Salvadoran guerrilla group picked up a large shipment of arms on the Salvadoran coast after the shipment arrived by sea from Nicaragua.

In addition to vitally-needed ammunition, these guerrilla supply operations included greater quantities of more sophisticated heavier weapons. Recent deliveries have included M-60 machine guns, M-79 grenade launchers, and M-72 antitank weapons, thus significantly increasing guerrilla firepower. Individual units also regularly receive tens of thousands of dollars for routine purchases of non-lethal supplies on commercial markets and payments (including bribes) to enable the clandestine pipeline to function. On March 15, 1982, the Costa Rican Judicial Police announced the discovery of a house in San Jose, Costa Rica with a sizable cache of arms, explosives, uniforms, passports, documents, false immigration stamps from more than thirty countries, and vehicles with hidden compartments -- all connected with ongoing arms traffic through Costa Rican territory to Salvadoran guerrillas.

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During 1982, specific examples of the Cuban/Nicaraguan support have been provided by two high-level FMLN leaders captured in mid-1982. One of them, called "Alejandro Montenegro," was seized in Honduras on 22 August 1982 in conjunction with a raid on a Salvadoran insurgent safehouse. Montenegro provided some significant information:

--He said that the Cubans played a major role in training those who conducted the successful 27 January 1982 raid on the Salvadoran air base at Ilopango, when a dozen aircraft were damaged or destroyed.

--Montenegro himself directed the attack, using an eight-man insurgent team which had received five months of special infiltration and sabotage training in Cuba.

--He said that he personally attended two high level meetings with Cuban officials in 1981 - one in Havana and the other in Managua - to discuss the situation in El Salvador and receive strategic advice.

Montenegro also confirmed that Nicaragua remains the primary source of insurgent weapons and ammunition.

--One of the insurgents captured with Montenegro made five trips to Managua in 1982 to pick up arms for the insurgents.

--He used a truck modified by the Sandinistas to carry concealed weapons.

--[redacted] the Sandinistas have three repair shops for such modifications under direction of a special section at the Ministry of Defense.

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The other captured Salvadoran guerrilla leader, Lopez Arriola, admitted attending a platoon leaders course in Cuba in July 1979. He also said that:

--Hundreds of Salvadoran insurgents have received guerrilla training in Cuba;

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--Cubans give special courses for combatants, commanders, staff officers, and intelligence officials;

--He had attended a top-level insurgent strategy meeting with Fidel Castro in Havana in June 1981. Lopez Arriola revealed that the Sandinistas have control of weapons delivered from Vietnam to Nicaragua for the Salvadoran insurgents, and the guerrillas have to ask permission to draw on the supplies. He added that the Sandinistas nevertheless give the insurgents an extensive base of operations in and around Managua, and even provide a school for their children.

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