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Washington, D.C. 20505

OLL 84-3015/1
5 June 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Rear Admiral John Poindexter
Deputy Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

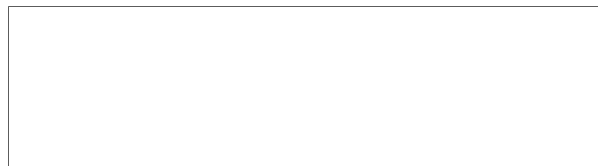
SUBJECT: Presidential Letter from Congressman Hamilton

1. Attached you will find our suggested answer to Congressman Hamilton in response to his letter to the President dated 31 May.

2. As I informed Ron Sable, Congressman Hamilton has not been directly in touch with the Agency on this matter. We received inquiries concerning the President's speech from the House Intelligence staff. The staff informed us they were calling for Congressman Hamilton.

3. For your information, the staff is basically attempting to identify hard intelligence held by this Agency on the exact amount of arms shipped from Nicaragua to the Salvador rebels. As we are unable to give a precise answer to this question, we will probably find them hammering this issue further. As the letter indicates, our basic response is that the quantity of arms shipped into Nicaragua by the Soviet Bloc is far in excess of Managua's needs. There can be no question that many of those arms are being shipped on to Salvador. At no time have we indicated to Congressman Hamilton or any other Member of our Oversight Committees that we expected or predicted that Nicaragua would be sending tanks, armored personnel carriers or other heavy equipment into Salvador.

4. Please let us know if there is any other information we can provide.

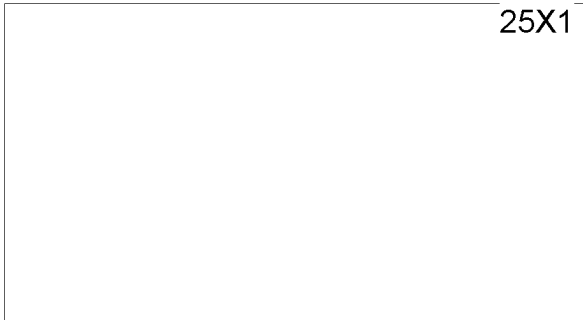


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Clair E. George
Director, Office of Legislative Liaison

Attachment:
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FROM ATTACHMENT



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WASFAX MESSAGE RECEIPT

JUN 5 4 19 74 '84

5 JUN 1984

IMMEDIATE

FROM

Clair E. George, Director, Office of Legislative Liaison/CIA

SUBJECT

Presidential Letter From Congressman Hamilton

CLASSIFICATION

TOP SECRET

SENT TO:

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EXTENSION

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Rear Admiral John Poindexter

456 -
2225

West Wing
White House

Deputy Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

REMARKS:

PLEASE CALL FOR PICK UP

The Honorable Lee H. Hamilton
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Hamilton:

Thank you for your letter of 31 May to the President, which has been referred to me to answer. I have been in contact with the Central Intelligence Agency about the information it has given to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence on the delivery of Communist military-associated equipment to Nicaragua and the provision of arms to the guerrillas in El Salvador. I am assured that the Agency has given you all of its finished intelligence on these topics.

I am also told that Mr. Richard Giza and Mr. Thomas Latimer of the HPSCI staff spoke with the Agency asking about the President's interview of 28 May with Irish television. They were referred to articles in the National Intelligence Dailies of 29 and 31 May which discuss the most recent arms deliveries to Nicaragua by Bulgarian and Soviet merchant ships. Copies of those articles, as well as a more recent NID article of 2 June, are enclosed.

I would like to address the substance of this problem, beginning with the Soviet and East European supply of heavy weapons to Nicaragua. The Bulgarian arms delivery of late May contained at least 41 T-54/55 medium tanks, 38 BTR 152 armored personnel carriers, as well as other military-related equipment. With this latest delivery of Soviet-made equipment, Nicaragua has effectively doubled its armor holdings--which now include some 110 medium tanks, 26 light amphibious tanks, and 100 armored personnel carriers--since May 1983. The tanks and other major items of hardware appear intended to boost the Sandinistas' own conventional and counterinsurgency capabilities.

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WHEN SEPARATED FROM ENCLOSURES



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In addition to these major armor shipments, Nicaragua continues to receive a steady flow of small arms and ammunition, for its own purposes and to supply the insurgents in El Salvador. Over the last four years, the unprecedented growth of Nicaragua's military machine has enabled Managua to free up other stockpiles of arms and ammunition for delivery to the guerrillas in El Salvador. [redacted] stated in the past that air and ship traffic from Cuba regularly bring small arms and ammunition into Nicaragua. We estimate that from early 1982 to late 1983, the Salvadoran insurgents received about 80 percent of their ammunition and 45 percent of their arms from Nicaragua. These figures are derived [redacted] captured guerrilla documents, and [redacted] regarding the infiltration of weapons into El Salvador during the specified period. Moreover, [redacted] earlier this year indicated that the guerrillas were prepared to receive some 3.8 tons of ammunition and other military-related supplies. In addition, [redacted] recently reported that arms, ammunition, and other supplies are being flown into Honduras from Nicaragua, and then transported into El Salvador; the aircraft used reportedly belong to one of the Salvadoran guerrilla factions and are regularly based in Nicaragua.

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In sum, neither the National Security Council nor the CIA believe the President's statement was misleading. As always, the Agency is ready to brief you personally and in detail should you wish more information.

Sincerely,

John M. Poindexter
Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security

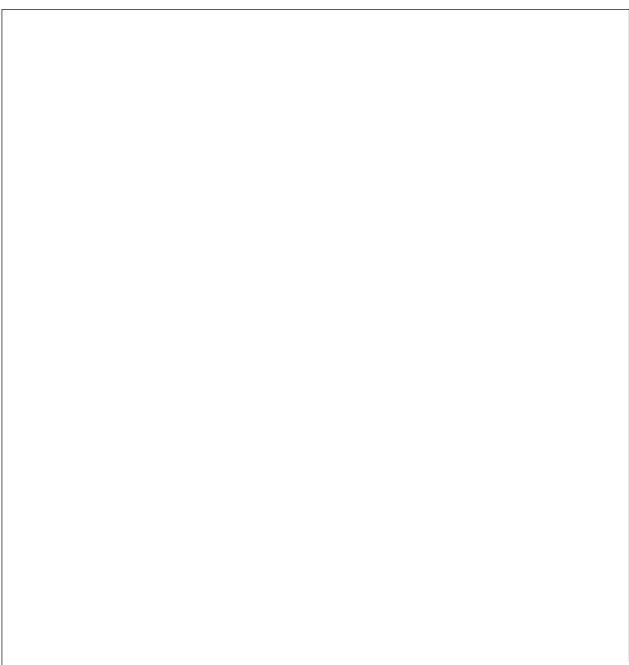
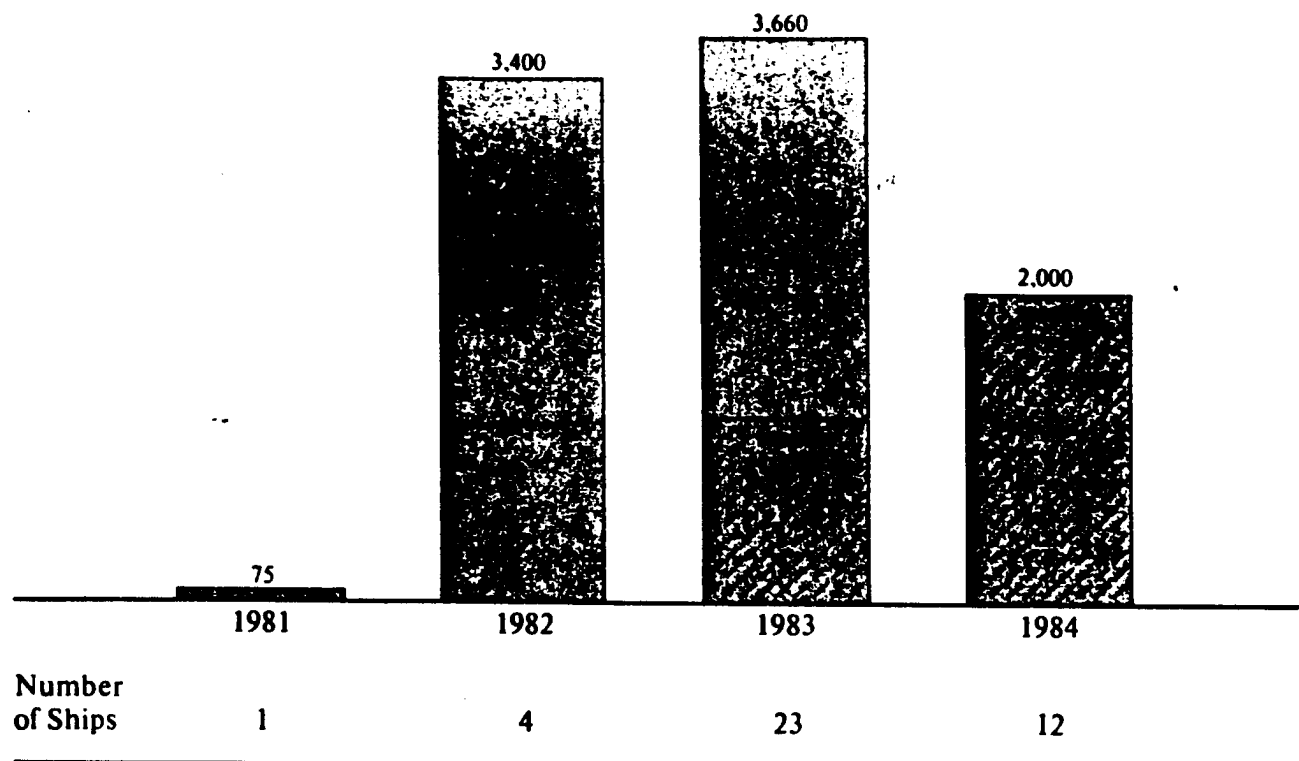
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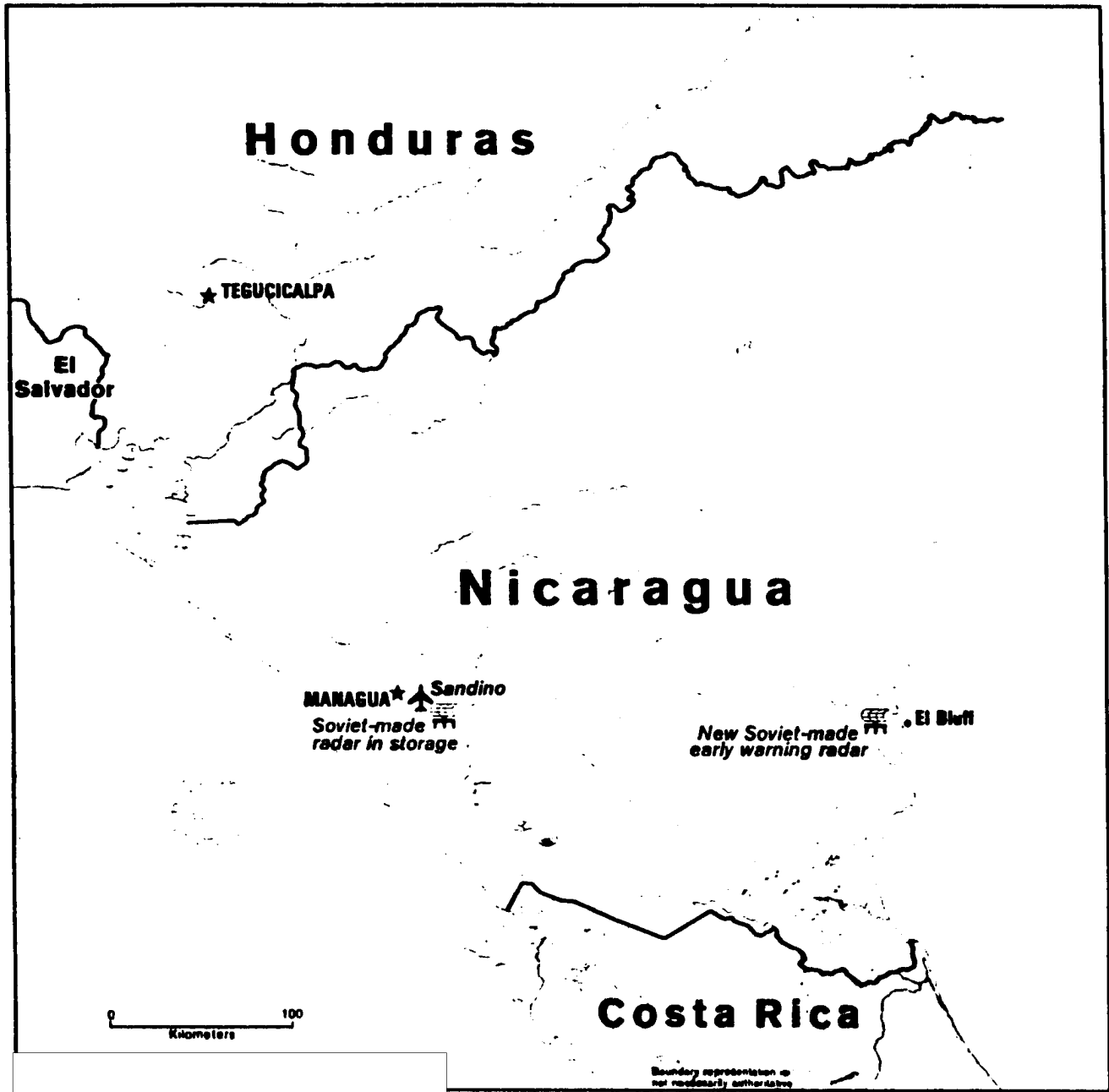
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**Nicaragua: Deliveries of Communist
Military-Associated Equipment
by Soviet Merchant Ships**

Metric tons



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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE

ON INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

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84-2500

THOMAS K. LATIMER, STAFF DIRECTOR
MICHAEL J. O'NEIL, CHIEF COUNSEL
STEVEN K. BERRY, ASSOCIATE COUNSEL

May 31, 1984

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

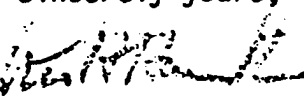
You were quoted in the press as stating that there is a "flood" of Soviet arms flowing through Nicaragua's ports to guerrillas in El Salvador. According to the reports, you cited the presence of a Bulgarian ship unloading tanks and armored personnel carriers at a port in Nicaragua. You were also quoted as saying that "just a week or two ago, there were Soviet ships in there unloading war materiel" and that the Sandinistas are "funneling this through to the guerrillas in El Salvador."

The implication for the American people of those remarks is that the Soviet Union is stepping up the provision of war materiel to the guerrillas in El Salvador, perhaps even to include the introduction of tanks and armored personnel carriers.

I requested the Central Intelligence Agency to provide me the intelligence which supports your dramatic assertions. Their response is that they have no intelligence to support your claim that the recent Bulgarian and Soviet shipments to Nicaragua are being sent on to the Salvadoran guerrillas. My own guess is that those supplies may well be for Nicaragua's own use in fighting off the attacks of the contras who are armed and funded by the United States. That, in fact, is the CIA's own judgment as to the purpose of the Bulgarian and Soviet shipments you cited.

If such is the case, then your statement was clearly misleading and is in need of being publicly corrected.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

LEE H. HAMILTON, M.C.