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PROGRAM ABC World News Tonight STATION WJLA-TV  
ABC Network

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SUBJECT Covert Action/Nicaragua

FRANK REYNOLDS: The law would seem to be clear. The United States, specifically the CIA, is forbidden to help any group whose purpose is to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. Yet there have been many reports that the U.S. and the CIA is doing just that.

And tonight, Pentagon correspondent John McWethy has this report on what he has learned from people who know what's going on.

JOHN MCWETHY: U.S. intelligence sources tell ABC News that the CIA, with full cooperation from the U.S. military, has set up a coordinated communications network and reconnaissance operation to help the so-called Contra rebels with military efforts against Nicaragua.

Sources say there are two types of reconnaissance efforts, one involving American spy planes, the other infiltration of CIA operatives into Nicaragua, all with the purpose of tracking Nicaraguan troops movements that might threaten the American-backed Contra insurgents.

Many of the insurgents were associated with Anastasio Somoza, the deposed Nicaraguan dictator.

Sources say the CIA has tried to limit the number of operatives who are American citizens, for fear they could be caught inside Nicaragua and embarrass the U.S. Intelligence sources claim there are approximately 100 U.S. citizens involved and hundreds of others who are not American but are paid by the CIA. Their job: to fund, train and guide the rebels in the fight against the government of Nicaragua.

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In addition, sources claim that last year the CIA bought about a dozen small boats in the U.S. and modified them with machine gun mounts. The boats have been used by CIA operatives to patrol waterways used by Nicaragua to run guns to anti-American rebels in El Salvador.

In addition, the U.S. Navy has increased its presence off the coast of Nicaragua, using radar aboard two frigates to help with the operation.