

CBS EVENING NEWS
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NICARAGUA/U.S. / SAWYER: The leftist government of Nicaragua made another significant gesture of conciliation toward the United States today. At the State Department, Bill McLaughlin tells us it's still more evidence that the U.S. strategy is beginning to show results.

MCLAUGHLIN: The Reagan administration's hopes for finding a peaceful solution to its feud with Nicaragua appear higher than they have been in months. EDWIN MEESE (Presidential Counselor): We have always been interested, ah, in having a political solution on a regional basis to the problems in Central America.

MCLAUGHLIN: Nicaragua's Sandinist regime is suggesting that it's willing to make significant concessions to end U.S. hostility. One major U.S. demand is for the withdrawal of the estimated 2,000 foreign military advisers in Nicaragua, mostly Cuban, with a sprinkling of Soviets and East Europeans. Today, Nicaragua's interior minister, *Thomas Borhay, said his regime would be willing to get rid of all the advisers. Borhay, who hopes to make a conciliatory visit to Washington next week, said Nicaragua was prepared to get rid of all the foreign advisers, if the U.S. withdrew its advisers from El Salvador and Honduras. The State Department sounded a cautionary note. ALAN ROMBERG (State Dept. Spokesman): We don't have any information, ah, to suggest that the Cuban presence, military or civilian, ah, has been reduced permanently.

MCLAUGHLIN: There were also reports from Nicaragua that the Sandinistas have started to put distance between themselves and the rebels in El Salvador. What the Sandinistas hope to get in return is an end to border attacks by the U.S.-backed contra rebels. There were press reports today that the CIA now believes that the contras, our 10-12,000-man Nicaraguan exile force cannot overthrow the Sandinistas. But reliable sources tell CBS News that the CIA has never believed that the rebels would ever be more than a tool to extract concessions from Nicaragua--a policy that may now be working. Bill McLaughlin, CBS News, the State Department.