

ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT  
16 March 1984

NICARAGUA/  
FIGHTING

JENNINGS: In Nicaragua, antigovernment forces have made a surprise attack near the southern border with Costa Rica. They opened fire on a group of Nicaraguans who resisted being taken prisoner. They killed an eight-year-old boy. Our Pentagon correspondent, John McWethy, reports that all along Nicaragua's northern border, there is even more fighting now taking place.

MCWETHY: U.S. intelligence analysts say the tension on the border between Nicaragua and Honduras is now higher than it has been at any time since American troops arrived in Honduras last summer. There have been scores of incidents, shooting from both sides. Analysts say the growing tension and the possibility that it could lead to broader conflict is a direct result of American pressure, psychological pressure from U.S. military exercises in Honduras and real military pressure from the CIA-backed contra rebels who strike targets throughout Nicaragua. The rebels, now some 12,000 to 15,000 strong, are based in Honduras and in the last month have successfully attacked Nicaragua, guerrilla style, by air, land and sea. They have mined harbors, sinking a Nicaraguan coast guard boat. They have bombed key radio transmitters and weapons warehouses and have attacked civilian economic targets all along the border. Reagan administration officials are ecstatic about the CIA's success and the damage done to Nicaragua, but critics say the operation is simply galvanizing opposition to the U.S. and driving Nicaragua deeper into the Soviet camp. John McWethy, ABC News, the Pentagon.