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NICARAGUA/
FRANCE

UTLEY: Squeezing Nicaragua is one of the main goals of the Reagan administration. Among the weapons are mines laid along Nicaragua's coasts to stop shipping. Today it was disclosed that France has offered to clear those mines and that Nicaragua has accepted the offer. And as Fred Francis reports, that's causing some unhappiness in Washington.

FRANCIS: Administration officials are indignant over the French offer to clear the mines from Nicaraguan ports. One State Department source said it was perhaps unwise for the CIA to lay the mines, but the French have no business interfering. Another said, we have made it brutally plain to France to butt out. Publicly, the administration is asking France not to take sides. JOHN HUGHES (State Department Spokesman): We have all along been concerned with the large Soviet and Cuban military relationship with Nicaragua, and we would not favor any nation's contributing to Nicaragua's ability to export revolution.

FRANCIS: The ports of Corinto and Sandino were mined by CIA-sponsored rebels in January, and again last month. Rebel sources say that a mothership controlled by the CIA supplies the mines to small attack boats. Half a dozen ships have been damaged, including a Soviet tanker. The mines, which are basketball size, are detonated by a ship's vibration. The CIA's strategy is to paralyze the Nicaraguan economy. But congressional critics are now saying how can the administration war Iran not to mine the Persian Gulf, yet condone the CIA's mining of Nicaraguan waters. Fred Francis, NBC News, the State Department.