

ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT
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WORLD COURT

JENNINGS: The court has ruled that the United States should stop mining the harbors of Nicaragua, and there was more. Here's ABC's Al Dale.

DALE: It was a unanimous ruling. The 15 judges, including one from the United States, told the U.S. to stop mining Nicaraguan harbors. The decision read by aging Chief Judge Taslem Elias of Nigeria says, quote, 'The United States of America should immediately cease and refrain from any action restricting, blocking or endangering access to or from Nicaraguan ports and in particular the laying of mines.' The court also flatly rejected a U.S. request that the case be thrown out on a technicality and because in the U.S. view the court has no jurisdiction. Today's decision amounts to an order, but the court has no enforcement powers. Nicaragua charges the U.S. has been violating international law, depriving Nicaraguans of, quote, 'life, liberty and security by supporting invasion and sabotage. Just before the case was filed, the U.S. notified the World Court that it would not recognize court decisions on Central America for the next two years. U.S. representatives here said they only showed up at the Hague out of respect for the court. Nevertheless, Nicaragua's chief legal representative to the court called today's ruling a moral and legal victory. UNIDENTIFIED NICARAGUAN CHIEF LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE: When law is respected, it tends to conduce to peace. So we feel that this will bring or help to bring peace in the area.

DALE: The chief U.S. lawyer here declined comment until the decision could be studied. The court invited both parties to submit further arguments on the question of jurisdiction. Lack of a clear answer on that did not prevent the court today from awarding round one to Nicaragua. Al Dale, ABC News, the Hague.

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DUNSMORE: This is Barrie Dunsmore in Washington. A month ago, the Reagan administration seemed to be telling the World Court to mind its own business and stay out of Central American affairs. However, in reaction to today's court findings, the State Department took the high road.

JOHN HUGHES (State Department spokesman): The United States respects the court and the rule of law and intends to act accordingly.

DUNSMORE: The U.S. still argues that the World Court does not have jurisdiction in Central America. This remains unresolved. However, U.S. officials said today that if the court rules against the U.S. on the jurisdiction issue, then Washington will abide by its rulings. As for today's preliminary court statement, the U.S. takes the view that it does not affect U.S. policy toward Nicaragua.

HUGHES: Nothing contained in the measures indicated by

the court is inconsistent with current United States policy or activities, with respect to Nicaragua.

DUNSMORE: The key word there is current. The U.S. was behind the mining of Nicaraguan ports, an operation Richard Nixon yesterday called 'Mickey Mouse.' However, that has already been stopped. As to continued support for the contras, the U.S. claims that is a legal action, in view of Nicaragua's policy of trying to overthrow the government of El Salvador. And so the U.S. has decided to approach the World Court differently, at least from a public relations point of view. But it does not appear there is any intention of allowing World Court decisions to significantly change U.S. policy toward Nicaragua. Barrie Dunsmore, ABC News, the State Department.

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COLLINS: This is Peter Collins in Nicaragua. Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto lost no time in hailing what he called Nicaragua's victory in the World court.

MIGUEL D'ESCOTO (Nicaraguan Foreign Minister): For the United States to tell the court that it is not supposed to consider any case of Central America, this is really, is the, the summit of all arrogance.

COLLINS: As for President Reagan's speech last night, D'Escoto dismissed it by comparing it to a 1960s movie comedy. D'ESCOTO: What we heard last night from the president of the United States was nothing more and nothing less than a very hysterical appeal, ah, to the people of the United States, that the Russians were coming.

COLLINS: Behind the rhetoric is a very real fear here of rising tensions on both of Nicaragua's borders. At a point near the border with Honduras, Sandinista gunners earlier this week shot down an American-made helicopter belonging to the Honduran air force. Honduras is not threatening to break relations with Nicaragua over the incident. And to the South, fighting between the Sandinistas and CIA-backed rebel Eden Pastora may spill over into Costa Rica. With all this going on, the Sandinistas are clearly delighted the World Court has

handed them what they consider a major victory in the battle for public opinion in the United States. The Sandinistas know perfectly well the World Court has no power to stop the United States. But they believe they've reminded the U.S. that a court that prides itself on the rule of law must live within the law. Peter Collins, ABC News, Managua, Nicaragua.

JENNINGS: Later in this broadcast, President Reagan wins a round on aid for El Salvador. The federal government must pay for diseases caused by its own nuclear testing. And in Chicago, they played ball for more than eight hours.