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SUBJECT

Interview With Former CIA Employee, David MacMichael

JOAN LUNDEN: From 1981 to 1983, David MacMichael worked under contract for our CIA.

His job was to sort through and analyze military and political developments in Central America. Well this past week, he has stirred up some controversy by publicly criticizing the Agency and American policy in that part of the world. He charges, among other things, that the Reagan Administration is not telling the truth when it says that Nicaragua is a major supplier of weapons to the leftist rebels in El Salvador.

And David MacMichael and Steve Bell joining now from Washington. Good morning, Mr. MacMichael.

DAVID MacMICHAEL: Good morning.

LUNDEN: You've said that our government is wrong when it claims that the Sandinista government of Nicaragua is exporting revolution with arms to the rebels in El Salvador. If that is, in fact, not the truth, then what is?

MacMICHAEL: What I am saying is that the -- the evidences does not support the Administration claim of massive continuing arms flow from Nicaragua into El Salvador for use of the insurgents. We had abundant evidence of this as accepted by everyone from, roughly, the fall of 1980 until the spring of 1981, and since that the time the -- the evidence that seizures, which once were common, and so forth, completed ceased. As a

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matter of fact, there's been no seizure of an arms shipment in the past three years.

LUNDEN: You say that they have a lack of evidence, but do you have evidence and proof, facts, that in fact they have ceased?

MacMICHAEL: [Laughs]. That's a difficult question to answer. It's -- certainly, we've got a pattern in this same three years of the Administration continuing to charge that Nicaragua does it, and Nicaragua continues to deny that it does it.

And it seems to me that it's incumbent upon the person who brings the charge to bring forth the evidence.

STEVE BELL: Mr. MacMichael, when I talked to several members of Congress and the intelligence community last night about your charges, they said it's subject to interpretation. There can be honest differences. However, they still are getting numerous sightings, night flights across the border, unmarked planes, unmarked boats going across the bay. What are those doing if they aren't carrying weapons?

MacMICHAEL: Well, I -- I really can't say what they might be doing, but it seems to me, Mr. Bell, that if these sightings are as frequent as they are, or if they are accurate as they seem to be, and with the resources deployed in the Gulf of Fonseca and air resources in the region it seems most unlikely to me, especially with the -- the crucial nature of this -- this charge to support the Administration policy that one, two, three of these things would be intercepted and brought forward as evidence.

BELL: But there are so many analysts, as you were, in the defense establishment and intelligence establishment -- all the various branches. Why are you the only person coming out and saying this?

MacMICHAEL: I'm the only person coming out and saying it, but I'd rather believe that there are people are not coming out and saying it.

BELL: Who believe the same as you do?

MacMICHAEL: I think so, yes.

LUNDEN: And what is it that you believe? Do you believe that it's bad intelligence gathering, bad spying, if you

will, or do you believe that the government is deliberately something? And if so, why?

MacMICHAEL: Well, I think, you know, one would have to say that once the decision was made to support the so-called Contras allegedly for the purpose of interdicting the arms, when that decision was made I inquired and asked to see the analysis on which this was based. In my experience in dealing with insurgencies and the interdiction of the arms supplies in Southeast Asia, for example, these activities were always preceded by very careful analyses and continuing analyses of the -- of the supply system, of the organization you were opposing, the routes they were using, the type of arms that were coming across, the -- the impact on their operations any interdiction at a particular level would cause, and this, to my knowledge, has never been done. So, it -- it seemed to me from the beginning that the -- the interdiction of arms has not really been the true purpose of the Contras, and the Contras themselves are going to say it's not.

BELL: A brief final question. A lot of people who might want to hear your charges are bothered that you've been down there in Nicaragua with the Sandinistas protesting in front of the U.S. Embassy. You have more at stake here than just your interpretation of the data?

MacMICHAEL: I have, you know, I'm very open in my opposition to the policy which I regard as, you know, fraught with danger for the United States, certainly, and the way it's being carried out is producing deaths and atrocities everyday in Nicaragua, and I certainly didn't check my constitutional right to protest openly against policies with which I disagree when I joined the CIA and when I signed the secrecy agreement by which I -- I do abide.

LUNDEN: Mr. MacMichael, thank you for joining us and giving us your views. And we should just say for the record that the State Department and the CIA declined to comment on what Mr. MacMichael has said, and both declined to send a spokesperson to join us this morning.