

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
12 July 1984

US REPORT ON NICARAGUAN ARMS ROLE DELAYED  
BY ROBERT PARRY  
WASHINGTON

A Reagan administration draft report, arguing that leftist Nicaragua still ships arms to Salvadoran guerrillas, is getting a second look from officials who fear it won't convince critics of the claim.

The 35-page report, which was first expected out in late May, then in June and then last week, remains unpublished as some administration officials press for release of secret intelligence to buttress the charges — and others question the value of having a new report at all.

The draft report, entitled "Background Paper: Nicaragua's Military Build-up and Support for Central American Subversion," was prepared by the State and Defense departments. It maintains that military shipments, with Nicaraguan collaboration, continue to flow to El Salvador by sea, air and land.

Nicaragua's alleged support for the Salvadoran guerrillas has been central to President Reagan's charge that El Salvador's government is the target of external communist aggression and to justification for covert CIA aid to rebels fighting to oust the leftist Nicaraguan government.

Administration officials privately predicted release of the new report in May, put a "June 1984" date on the draft sent to Capitol Hill, and then said it would be issued last week.

But State Department spokesman Joseph Reap said Wednesday that "there's no delay. There's never been a promise of a date. We always said we hoped to have something." A copy of the draft report was obtained two weeks ago by The Associated Press.

While the report says it relies "primarily upon evidence available throughout Central America and elsewhere in the public record," State Department officials, speaking anonymously, say the public information is supported by still-secret U.S. intelligence, including radio intercepts.

But one senior State Department official, who spoke on the condition he not be identified, told a reporter that, as written, the report doesn't provide the "smoking gun" that would provide the public proof of the administration's allegations.

He is understood to have argued that it not be released because it would only raise further doubts about whether the administration really knows whether the Sandinista government is supplying arms to the rebels.

Some officials have pushed for declassification of the intelligence they say they have, but others contend that such a release would compromise U.S. intelligence sources and methods, making it harder to obtain future information.

Officials also said that even publication of all the intelligence would not convince some critics who charge that Reagan is exaggerating Nicaragua's support for leftist Salvadoran guerrillas.

*Continued*