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Behind the scenes in Nicaragua

Based on the sensational statements of a newly defected Sandinista security official, Reagan administration warnings about the crisis in the Caribbean are an understatement.

According to Miguel Bolanos Hunter, who escaped from Nicaragua in May and made his way to the United States through Costa Rica, the Marxist government in his homeland is the major focus of subversion in this hemisphere. Stuffed with Communist arms and Soviet-bloc advisers, the Sandinista government as he depicts it is the chief supplier and promoter of the insurrection in El Salvador, and of Marxist-guerrilla actions throughout the region.

Bolanos, who fought on the side of the Sandinistas in 1978 and 1979 and had served in state security (meaning secret police) since 1980, made these points in a wide-ranging press briefing conducted at the Heritage Foundation. "Nicaragua," he said, "has become today the new Cuba . . . The base of operations for the spread of international communism in the Western Hemisphere." Targets of insurgencies being planned there, he added, include Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia and Argentina.

Extensively debriefed by the State Department and Central Intelligence Agency, Bolanos has proved persuasive to U.S. officials and presumably skeptical interviewers from *The Washington Post*. He is a prolific source of data about Soviet-Cuban involvement in Nicaragua, killings by the regime, warfare against the Catholic Church, use of blackmail, double agents and other intelligence tricks. Yet, incredibly enough, he has yet to be called to testify by any committee of the Congress. Among the specifics he alleges:

- There are 5,000 Cuban teachers and educational advisers in Nicaragua, 2,000 involved in undercover military operations, 400 involved with state security. In addition, there are about 70 Soviets involved with the state-security apparatus, 40-50 East Germans,

and 20-25 Bulgarians. "The real power is with the Soviets. The Cubans feel they are underlings and have a high regard for the Soviets."

- Arms have flooded into the country from the Soviets including bazookas, machine guns, armored personnel carriers, tanks, SAM missiles and 200,000 AK-47s. Underground missile bases have been constructed, one of which is probably operational now. The Soviets have lavished arms aid on the Sandinistas gratis, exacting payment in other ways.

- "The state security forces have handguns which are the same as the KGB uses . . . The whole structure of the security system, the methods and means of working are from handbooks and studies given in Cuban and Bulgaria. This

year we will send people directly to the Soviet Union."

- The Sandinistas are the major source of supply for the guerrillas fighting in El Salvador, transporting arms and ammunition by boat, truck and small aircraft. They are encouraged by the Soviets who promise to give the Sandinistas two AK-47s for every one provided to the Salvador insurgents.

- "The Sandinistas give total help, advice and direction on how to manage the war and internal politics. The guerrillas are trained in Managua, the Sandinistas help the Air Force, Army and Navy get arms through . . . They use the houses of Nicaraguan officers for safe houses and command posts . . . You can say the whole guerrilla effort is managed by Nicaragua."

In addition to these basics,

Bolanos testified concerning Sandinista brutality and deception, neither of which would seem to be in short supply. He recounted the summary execution of prisoners captured after the Sandinista takeover, and the "psychological torture" administered to opponents of the regime, including a leader of the Miskito Indians.

Bolanos also told of schemes to entrap and discredit American officials, disrupt the visit of the Pope, frame and intimidate priests, manipulate church groups such as the Maryknolls, and plant double agents in the media. His provocative statements on these last two subjects barely skimmed the surface, and merit an extensive follow-up. One has to wonder why he hasn't been called to testify about these matters before the Congress.