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Castro said to increase arms flow

U.S. asserts Cuba aims to disrupt Salvadoran voting

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Washington—In mid-December, the State Department reported yesterday, Cuban President Fidel Castro ordered a heavy increase in arms shipments to insurgents in El Salvador with the immediate objective of disrupting the elections scheduled for next Sunday.

The weapons have been used, it said, through commands issued by insurgency headquarters near Managua, Nicaragua.

Before and since Mr. Castro's order, according to the department's account, the Nicaraguan vessels Monimbo, Aracely and Nicarao have made many arms runs from Cuba to Nicaragua. From there, it said, the arms were distributed to El Salvador directly by air or overland through Honduras and Guatemala, and indirectly through Costa Rica.

The Papalonal air field near Managua was cited as the base for "direct airlift" of weapons to guerrillas. Serial numbers on arms caches seized in Guatemala showed that the weapons were among those left behind by American troops in Vietnam.

With such details, the administration sharpened its charges that Cuba and Nicaragua, with Soviet support, sustain the insurgency in El Salvador and growing violence elsewhere in Central America. It drew on the recorded remarks of Cuban, Nicaraguan and insurgent leaders, despite their formal denials, to support its case.

In an additional move to reinforce its position, the administration summarized the reactions to private briefings of prominent Americans representing a wide political spectrum. Their remarks argue that still-secret information demonstrates Nicaragua's role as a base for the Salvadoran insurgency.

What the administration did not reveal yesterday was detailed intelligence on which some of its conclusions were based, such as agent reports and electronic interceptions. To do so, said Dean Fischer, the State Department spokesman, "might risk the lives of some brave people who believe it is important that the government of the United States know what is going on."

"A government that does not keep secrets does not receive them," he said. "The purpose here is thus not to produce new revelations, but to describe the general pattern of outside support for El Salvador's guerillas, including arms supply, training and command and control."

In fact, however, the three documents released

yesterday—dealing with the Cuban-Nicaraguan roles, the insurgent organization in El Salvador and the "statements by distinguished Americans"—did contain new details. They were one more in a series of recent actions to strengthen the administration position in support of the Salvadoran junta under President Jose Napoleon Duarte.

Two weeks ago, Adm. Bobby Inman, the deputy director of central intelligence, made public details—including photographs—of Nicaragua's own military buildup. Officials at that time promised a second public briefing to show links between the Salvadoran insurgency and its outside supporters.

Secret details were provided to Congress and groups of private citizens, mostly former officials of both Republican and Democratic administrations. Meanwhile, a brisk debate continued within the administration about what details to make public. Yesterday's release of the three papers, essentially a compromise, was the result.

The documents made three basic points. The first, regarding arms supplies, was reinforced by evidence as diverse as reports of ship and aircraft movements and of arms supplies seized throughout Central America. In some cases, the report said, it was impossible to learn where the increasingly complex weapons were to be used, since Cuba and Nicaragua supply insurgents in Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

Regarding the training of guerrillas, the administration reported that seized documents show Salvadoran insurgents are instructed in both Cuba and Nicaragua. For command and control, the documents say, the five insurgent groups in El Salvador are directed by a Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU) based near Managua. The insurgents are united, temporarily at least, under the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).

A separate political wing of the FMLN, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) "operates outside El Salvador" according to the report. In fact, officials say privately, many of its members are in Mexico, though that was omitted from the report to avoid offending Mexican leaders.

Most of the power in the FMLN rests with leftist groups committed to violent revolution, according to U.S. officials. Some smaller moderate groups, including Social Democrats under Guillermo Manuel Ungo, have helped to make the insurgency respectable to some Americans.

The documents, in support of the contention that the increased arms shipments were aimed at the March 28 elections, cited a raid by Costa Rican police only six days ago on a "safe house" that produced, along with nine arrests, the seizure of weapons including machine guns, explosives and grenades.