

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE A-31

WASHINGTON POST  
9 August 1984

# Nicaraguan Aid to Guerrillas Cited

## Administration Reveals New Documents, Film as It Presses Case

By Joanne Omang  
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Reagan administration, pressing its case against Nicaragua as a supplier of arms to guerrillas in El Salvador, yesterday made public new captured documents and aerial intelligence film that it said demonstrate the need for continued U.S. aid to El Salvador.

The fuzzy videotape, translated documents and crude waterspotted maps were "substantially the same" as material provided in secret presentations to the House and Senate intelligence committees earlier this year, Gen. Paul F. Gorman, head of the U.S. Southern Command, told reporters at a State Department briefing.

Gorman said the material was declassified at the request of several committee members and demonstrates "the validity of President [Jose Napoleon] Duarte's judgment that his country is the victim of a pernicious form of aggression by Nicaragua."

U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Thomas R. Pickering said no single piece of evidence was "a smoking gun or a silver bullet," but that together it indicated a continuing arms flow. He is visiting members of Congress this week warning them that failure to aid El Salvador now would "seriously undermine" Duarte, who was elected in May in part on his promise to bring in more U.S. help.

Duarte "cannot long endure without U.S. assistance," Gorman said. "A guerrilla offensive is imminent."

Gorman said military operations that obtained the new material show that Salvadoran military leaders are better able to respond to U.S. intelligence tips, to gather their own intelligence "by sound—and by that I mean humane—use of guerrilla defectors, prisoners and documents," and to control their troops. U.S. military trainers have long been critical of the Salvadoran armed forces in all those areas.

Gorman outlined four cases of materiel movement into El Salvador. Without citing a source for his account, he traced a shipment of assorted munitions from its arrival April 28 at El Espino beach in southeast El Salvador through its transport in backpacks and then by mule toward the provincial capital of San Miguel, where a major battle occurred May 6. Bulgarian-made ammunition and a Vietnamese mortar sight captured there "probably" arrived April 28, Gorman said.

A guerrilla deserter helped Salvadoran troops in overrunning a large guerrilla camp May 25, and a crude hand-drawn map was captured that showed "safe routes" near those previously described, Gorman said. This map has previously been made public.

He then showed an aerial videotape, taken the night of June 10 from U.S. AC130 surveillance planes at an altitude of 6,000 to 12,000 feet over the same area. The narration said the moving white "hot spots" on the heat-sensitive tape were a 75-foot mother ship pretending to be a shrimper, unloading crates into small boats half a mile offshore. The boats then sped to land and were unloaded by 150 people who packed the cargo onto mules, the voice said.

The "home movie quality" tape, in which all moving objects were small white blobs, is only about 60 percent of what the aircraft crews can see with night-vision goggles, other State Department officials said.

In another case, U.S.-made weapons in a cache unearthed July 27 near the guerrilla stronghold at the Guazapa volcano in central El Salvador were traced primarily to Vietnam, Gorman said. A June 21 count of 214 newly captured U.S.-made M16 rifles found that 156 of them, or 73 percent, had been sent to Vietnam, and only 40, or 19 percent, had been sent to the Salvadoran armed forces.

Pickering said previous estimates from Undersecretary of Defense Fred C. Ikle that guerrillas buy or capture 50 percent of their arms from Salvadoran forces had been retracted and that the current estimate is about 12 percent.

Captured Chinese-made rocket and grenade launchers carried serial numbers that were close to those found on launchers captured when U.S. troops invaded Grenada to oust a Marxist government there last year, Gorman said. "It seems reasonable to conclude that the rocket launchers . . . are from the same shipment," he said.

"The guerrilla front is ludicrous in insisting that it gets no ordnance from abroad. External support . . . continues to be a mainstay of the guerrillas," Gorman said. He acknowledged, however, that Salvadoran forces had not captured any of it. "We have yet to intercept one of these crates," he said. "We know the stuff is coming; we have yet to get our hands on it."