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# Castro called real president of Nicaragua

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## INTERVIEW

The commander of Nicaragua's National Liberation Army, Pedro Ortega, also known as "Juan Carlos," on fighting Castro in Nicaragua.

*One of the groups of Nicaraguan exiles fighting a guerrilla war against Nicaragua's Sandinista government is led by a former businessman, Pedro Ortega, who uses the nom de guerre, "Juan Carlos." Born in Spain, he came to Nicaragua as a child and owned a match factory in Managua when the Sandinistas took power in 1979.*

*"Juan Carlos" now commands the National Liberation Army (ELN). The official Sandinista newspaper calls him "the Chief of the Jackals."*

*When "Juan Carlos" visited Washington last week, Latin American expert Roger Reed interviewed him in Spanish for The Washington Times and translated the following excerpts:*

**Q: What is the National Liberation Army?**

A: The National Liberation Army was formed in mid-August 1979, at first as a humanitarian organization to aid the thousands of Nicaraguans who had to flee their country when the Sandino-communist forces took power. It is a civic-military organization composed of thousands of Nicaraguans, in the majority ex-members of the National Guard, inside and outside the country. We have the signatures of about 7,000 men who support us. Our goals are to give real freedom to the suffering people of Nicaragua, to help eradicate communism in all of Central America, and to establish a real pluralistic, democratic government.

**Q: Why are you fighting the Sandinistas?**

A: When the Sandinistas took power, they said they were going to establish a government that represented the people, that they would soon hold elections. But in a few months, the people realized that what had come to Nicaragua was not a democracy, but a continu

From the beginning, thousands of Cubans arrived and began to take key positions all over the country. And not just Cubans. There had been massive aid from international terrorist organizations like the Montoneros and the Chilean MIR and from Libya, and these people began to occupy positions in the government. The Nicaraguans were relegated to a back seat.

**Q: What has the National Liberation Army done against the Sandinistas?**

A: We have been inside Nicaragua fighting, and continue now with much more strength, in the northern zone, on the Atlantic coast, in countless places and villages. The *campesinos* have given us their total support; even serving as guides in the mountains. We have hundreds fighting in Nicaragua and have executed huge operations, not just along the border, but in the interior, to weaken the Sandino-communist economy. We believe that more than 800 Sandinista soldiers have died in these operations.

**Q: Is your command post in Honduras?**

A: I move all around and have no fixed position. The people of the National Liberation Army who are fighting are inside Nicaragua.

**Q: How many men are in the Sandinista armed forces?**

A: They have, according to our intelligence service and to ex-Sandinista sympathizers, about 25,000 in the regular force and a reserve of about 100,000. The Sandinista Front has begun a tremendous arms race. They have turned Nicaragua into one of the best-armed republics in the Caribbean, after Cuba.

**Q: It is said that Puerto Cabezas is being converted into a military zone ....**

A: Not just Puerto Cabezas. They have three important air bases, where any kind of aircraft, such as the MiG-21, can land. These bases are at Puerto Cabezas, Bluefields, and Montelimar.

Montelimar is the airfield that Fidel Castro uses privately. Castro is in Montelimar every eight to ten days. He goes to advise and to tell the Sandinista commanders what they have to do. He arrives, is there one

then goes back to Cuba. Sometimes he comes two or three times in the same week.

There is something else about Puerto Cabezas. They have taken all the Miskito Indians who lived there — about 10,000 or 15,000 — and sent them to the mountains in order to leave a free zone for a big military base operated totally by Cubans. Nicaraguans are not permitted there. It is a restricted zone, where internationalists are trained, who are sent to Honduras and El Salvador.

**Q: They are training guerrillas?**

A: They have trained thousands of Salvadorans. Airplanes leave constantly for the mountains of El Salvador, where men and war equipment are dropped. This is the way the Salvadoran guerrillas have been able to maintain themselves.

In Nicaragua they also train and supply the Honduran terrorist group, the *Chinchoneros*. All their war material comes from Nicaragua. In the northern zone, near Esteli, there is a base where hundreds of Hondurans were trained to destabilize the Honduran elections. They failed, because the Honduran military knew about this. But they were able to get lots of men and arms into Honduras.

There is something else. The Sandinistas and the Russians have already arranged to cut a canal. Russia intends, through Cuba, to begin as soon as possible to build a canal from the San Juan River, crossing Lake Nicaragua, and cutting through the department of Rivas at its most narrow part. This way, the canal would go to the Pacific Ocean. It would be an inter-oceanic canal. We know this is already arranged. If they haven't already begun to dig the canal, they could begin next month.

**Q: You are confronting over a hundred thousand armed men. How do you expect to defeat them? Is that your goal?**

A: Correct. The people of Nicaragua were tricked and are suffering. They are ready to confront any military

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