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'Commander Zero' wins asylum

By Sue Mullin
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CARTAGO, Costa Rica — Costa Rica is expected today to release anti-Sandinista leader Eden Pastora after granting him asylum.

Tuesday's offer of political asylum spares the famous "Commander Zero" — who has been detained at the Civil Guard headquarters here — from possible execution at the hands of former Sandinista comrades, who labeled him a "traitor" after he turned against the regime.

"The decree and its provisions is now being drafted,"

Costa Rican Foreign Ministry spokesman Luis Daniel Pattoni said Tuesday.

Pastora, who gave up his "contra" command and fled Nicaragua three weeks ago, claimed in an interview Monday that other contra groups were created by the CIA, not to defeat the Sandinistas but to use as a bargaining chip in (diplomatic) negotiations.

He also accused the CIA of betraying his contra faction by failing to give it even humanitarian aid — and having some of his field commanders to join another contra group based in Costa Rica.

"They're buying gold chains

with it," said Pastora of the \$5,000 he claims the CIA gave his former commanders. "I can certify it. One of them is in love with my daughter. He just sent her a gold chain."

The Foreign Ministry said the decision came after Pastora, 49, agreed to abide by Costa Rican laws and halt any further hostilities against the Sandinistas while there. Costa Rica has a neutrality policy in Central American affairs.

In a sarcastic barb aimed at the USA, Pastora added, "If I had to do anything over again, I would be born a communist because at least they know who their friends are."



Agence France-Press

PASTORA: He quit both the Sandinistas and 'contras.'