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President Says 'Flood' of Arms Justified Mining

By David Hoffman
Washington Post Staff Writer

COLORADO SPRINGS, May 29
—President Reagan today said the
CIA-backed mining of Nicaragua's
harbors was justified as an effort to
interdict "a flood" of Soviet arms
flowing through Nicaragua's ports to
leftist guerrillas in El Salvador.

But Reagan dismissed the controversy over the mining as "much ado about nothing" and said, "Those were homemade mines that couldn't sink a ship."

In an interview with Irish television that was recorded Monday and broadcast in Ireland tonight, Reagan offered his strongest justification so far for the mining, citing specific instances when ships had unloaded arms in Nicaragua's ports.

A storm of protest erupted on
Capitol Hill recently when it was
disclosed that the CIA had not fully
informed congressional oversight
committees about the extent of U.S.
involvement in the mining.

The magnetic mines, which re-
portedly would damage but not sink
vessels, were placed in Nicaraguan
harbors as part of the CIA's assist-
ance to anti-Sandinista "contras"—a
program Congress is threatening to
shut down.

The CIA reportedly worked from
a "mother ship" to help the contras
place the mines in Nicaraguan ports.
Reagan, questioned about the mining April 4 at a White House news conference, refused to comment on the "tactics" used by the contras.

But he vowed then to "inconvenience" the Sandinista regime if it continued to arm and train leftist rebels fighting the government of El Salvador.

Reagan offered a more detailed justification Monday in the interview with Brian Farrell of Ireland's government-run television.

The subject came up because Rea-

gan is expected to encounter demonstrations protesting his Central American policies when he visits Ireland on Friday.

Reagan said the protesters had been "misinformed" and "propagandized" by the "vast, worldwide disinformation machineries" of the Soviet Union and Cuba.

"I don't mean this to sound presumptuous, but is there any one of them that has access to all the information that the president of the United States has?" Reagan asked. "I'm not doing this because I've got a yen to involve ourselves or spend some money."

The president said he received "irrefutable evidence" shortly before his 1981 inauguration that the Sandinistas were exporting arms to the leftist guerrillas in El Salvador.

Reagan was asked about the mining after he asserted, as he often has before, that the Sandinistas had "no honor, no honesty" and were intending "further revolution throughout all of Latin America."

"Would that, nevertheless, justify mining ports?" Farrell asked.

"Those were homemade mines that couldn't sink a ship," Reagan said.

He added that "right now, there is a Bulgarian ship unloading tanks and armored personnel carriers at a port in Nicaragua. That is the fifth such Bulgarian ship in the last 18 months."

"Just a week or two ago, there were Soviet ships in there unloading war materiel," he said, claiming that the Sandinistas are "funneling this through to the guerrillas in El Salvador."

Reagan has recently won victories in Congress in his bid for additional military and economic aid for El Salvador, but the House rejected his request for \$21 million to continue funding the contras' effort.