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## Q&amp;A

Aid to Contras vital to U.S.  
role in NATORetired Maj. Gen. John K. Singlaub on our  
stake in Nicaragua.

*John K. Singlaub, now a retired major general, parachuted into France to organize resistance to the Nazis in World War II. He was later China Desk officer for the CIA. In 1976, he became U.S. chief of staff in South Korea, but was relieved a year later because he criticized President Carter's plans to withdraw troops from that country. The general retired from the Army in 1978 and now is seeking to aid resisters to communism around the world. In an interview with Ed Rogers of The Washington Times, Gen. Singlaub says failure to aid Nicaraguan "freedom fighters" could eventually jeopardize our support to NATO in western Europe.*

**Q: How do you go about helping resisters to communism?**

**A:** Well, I'm spending the vast majority of my time acting as the chairman of the U.S. Council for World Freedom, and now am chairman of the World Anti-Communist League, until September.

We have sort of a coalition for world freedom which contains a large number of other organizations with membership. We've had a large number of the ethnic organizations in this country — East European ethnic organizations, Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians and Poles. So we have been working very actively not only with the Afghan freedom fighters and the Nicaraguan freedom fighters but with the resistance movement inside southeast Asia in Laos and Cambodia and in Viet Nam.

**Q: How strong are the anti-Sandinistas in Nicaragua?**

**A:** They are well organized. There are 15,000. About 13,000 are inside Nicaragua. There are relatively few who are in Honduras — just 2,000. Large numbers of the Nicaraguan people and former Sandinistas want to join the the freedom fighters. They are so effective that the Sandinista government has launched a major disinformation campaign to discredit them, accusing them of atrocities, accusing them of all sorts of things, and these accusations are absolutely, totally false, they're pure fabrication.

**Q: How are they effective?**

**A:** In a recent action, right near the border with Honduras, about 1,500 freedom fighters attacked a garrison of about 2,000 Sandinistas. The Sandinistas were in the process of building a road so that they could bring heavy artillery and heavy mortars up close to the border and shell the base camps on the Honduran side of the border. The attack was very successful to the extent that Sandinistas were driven off of the position. After about a four-day battle, the Sandinistas left 288 dead and two prisoners.

**Q: Do you have figures on their size?**

**A:** 15,000 belong to the FDN [Nicaraguan Democratic Force]. The Misura Indians — this is an acronym for the three tribes that belong to that grouping, the Misquito, the Suma, and the Rama Indians — have about 2,400 or 2,500 under arms. They are not all active at present because of the cutoff of supplies. They could expand by several thousand without any difficulty at all. The 15,000 that belong to the FDN have about another 5,000 that have volunteered to be trained and equipped as soon as additional funding was available.

**Q: What is the Sandinista strength?**

**A:** The Sandinistas have about 62,000 in their armed forces. Now in addition to the regular Sandinista military, they have expanded that probably to 50,000 to 60,000 in the militia — meaning that under arms today there are probably 120,000. Their announced goal is to expand that armed force in Nicaragua to 250,000.

If they go to 250,000 in their armed camp, that means one out of every 10 men, women and children would be under arms. If the United States would have a comparable military force, we would have something over 23 million people in our armed forces.

**Q: What about the communist presence?**

**A:** Today in Nicaragua there are about 10,000 foreign advisers helping and of the 10,000 advisers that are there, about 7,000 are Cubans. About half of that 7,000 are military, the other half are so-called civilian advisers, engineers, teachers, doctors, etc. Of the remaining 3,000, it's an amazing assortment of terrorist organizations. In addition to the Soviet Union and Bulgaria and East Germany, we have representation from the PLO and from Qaddafi's Libya, from the Basque terrorists from Spain, from North Viet Nam, from North Korea and, believe it or not, recently the Ayatollah Khomeini has sent some of his Iranians there.

**Q: Are the Soviets still sending in military supplies?**

**A:** There for awhile there was about one ship coming in each week — either a Bulgarian ship or a Soviet Russian ship, and just as of a couple of months ago we actually counted some 350 armored vehicles. This includes tanks and armored personnel carriers. These are offensive weapons primarily, not defensive weapons, since no other nation in Central America

has any tanks to speak of. They're bringing in artillery which is way beyond any defensive needs. They're bringing in helicopters, gunships and troop carriers and have introduced the MI-24, which is referred to under NATO terminology as the Hind helicopter. This is the most potent, the most devastating anti-personnel type helicopter in the world. It's a gunship that has been used with such devastation against the Afghan population.

The Cubans and the Soviets are building large military bases there. Their airfield, with a 12,000-foot

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runway, will soon be the largest operational military airfield south of the Rio Grande. The ports are being expanded greatly, especially on the Atlantic coast.

**Q: Why is this a threat to the United States?**

**A:** Nicaragua is in a critical position because, from bases located in Nicaragua, it would be possible for the Soviets or the Cubans to close completely the Caribbean to shipping. Now that shipping is important to the United States because, since World War II, we have made the assumption that the Caribbean and the islands of the Caribbean would always be friendly. So we built our logistic support system for the European theater to depend very heavily on our gulf ports.

Our survival in Europe as a part of NATO and the survival of NATO, which depends in time of war upon shipments of supplies from the United States, will all depend upon our ability to keep those ports operating and to keep the ships flowing through the Caribbean. Now this means that if we have a confrontation with the Soviet Union in Europe, we must then commit U.S. forces to take out those bases, to open up that area.

**Q: Do you foresee any activity aimed directly at the United States?**

**A:** It's my view that the terrorist activity would be directed at the United States in a way that we'd find difficult to anticipate.

If we fail to provide the assistance to the Nicaraguan people, to take their country back for the Nicaraguans, it's going to generate additional refugees coming out of Nicaragua. It would be demoralizing to the other countries of Central America and Mexico, and large numbers will start heading north on foot, and there of course will be large numbers that will come by ship across the gulf to our gulf ports in Florida.

The estimate is in the tens of millions. The lowest I've seen is 10 million. More than 20 million is not an uncommon estimate. The population in that area, including Mexico, is something like 200 million.

Now those millions of refugees coming across our borders would contain large numbers of provocateurs, saboteurs, agents, who would conduct terrorist activities to destabilize the United States. It would create such problems that the governors of the United States would ask for federal troops to help close the border or help restore order. The only source of federal troops would be our five divisions in Europe. We'd probably be forced to withdraw those for our own internal security and, of course, this is just what the Soviets have been trying to do for years — get our troops out of Europe.

**Q: Has this potential threat to NATO, as far as you know, been given any attention whatsoever?**

**A:** Certainly, those people who have been involved in strategic planning — those of us who have been involved in NATO activities and have studied the logistical support system as I have, understand this very clearly.

**Q: Why doesn't the administration fight harder to restore aid to the Sandinista resistance?**

**A:** I think that there is a large body of opinion that enters the minds of the bureaucrats in this city, that is not related to the official reports coming out of that area. And it's my view that this comes from the disinformation program, so that the people are being deliberately misinformed. So they believe that the best policy for the United States is to continue support to the Sandinistas. They were sympathetic in support of the Sandinistas after the fall of Somoza

and hate to admit that their strong support for that Sandinista movement was wrong.

**Q: Did this kind of reaction ever occur before the Nicaragua situation arose?**

**A:** Well, I'm trying to be as generous as I can in this. I have to admit, having had dealings with foreign service officers for well over 40 years, that a high percentage of them are philosophically socialist in their outlook. And many of them believe that socialism is the wave of the future, and that the best policy of the United States, therefore, is to make an accommodation with the leader of the socialist movement, the Soviet Union. I would say that when you have a man who is as strong as Alexander Haig as secretary of state who could not turn that monstrous machine off its leftist course, that it would be hard for any lesser person to do that.

We apparently have people in the Department of State who are not only fuzzy minded but so pro-socialist, so pro-communist in their leanings that our policy is completely distorted away from what is best for the United States or best for the majority of the people in these countries.

**Q: What would you recommend now?**

**A:** From my point of view, I'm convinced that we have two choices in the United States. We can provide help to the freedom fighters and let the Nicaraguans solve the problems in Nicaragua, or we can delay, and ultimately we're going to be committing U.S. forces either to clear out those Soviet bases, because they're crippling us economically and strategically with respect to our commitment to Europe, or we're going to be fighting along the Rio Grande. We're going to have to commit forces, and it's my view that the longer we delay in providing this help to these freedom fighters in Nicaragua, the greater it increases the probability that U.S. troops are going to have to be committed.

**Q: Do you mean that the resistance can win if U.S. aid is restored?**

**A:** I started to say that at this point in the struggle, it's my view that the freedom fighters have greater support from the people than the Sandinistas did at a comparable stage against Somoza. Somoza did have support from the United States until the very end, when we withdrew that support. I think that at the maximum the Sandinistas had about 5,000 or 6,000 people under arms against about 12,000 that Somoza had in Guardia Nacional, and they were successful. Today there are 15,000-plus, almost 20,000 people who have been armed inside Nicaragua, who are opposing the Sandinistas with a great support from the people. It's fresh in the minds of the Nicaraguan people how these Sandinistas have violated their promises to the people. Instead of making things better, the economic system is in a shambles — not because of the economic sabotage created by the freedom fighters, but just through the incompetence and inefficiency of the centralized planning that they're attempting to do there.

Any country that tries to put 10 percent of its population under arms is going to have difficulties. I mean, when you look at the rest of the world, seldom does a country have more than 1 percent of its population in its armed forces. The total population of Nicaragua is about 2.5 million, and you're talking about having 250,000 people under arms. Well, this means you're going to have to have women and children and old people in this militia, and that is not going to improve the economy of Nicaragua.