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# Nicaragua alleges U.S. plot to oust Sandinista regime

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WASHINGTON — Nicaragua is accusing the Reagan administration of plotting a war between Honduras and Nicaragua in hopes of ousting Nicaragua's revolutionary government.

U.S. officials deny the accusation but say that Nicaragua's neighbors — particularly Honduras and Costa Rica — are fearful of military attacks against them now that Nicaragua, with help from Cuba, has become a base for the spreading of Marxist subversion in the region.

Both Honduras and Costa Rica have requested U.S. security assistance, according to the U.S. officials.

The positions of the two sides have been gleaned from a diplomatic note of protest that Nicaragua delivered to the United States last week and from conversations with Nicaraguan diplomats and State Department officials in the last few days.

Both sides agree that tension is increasing in Central America, particularly along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border area, which frequently is used by Nicaraguan exiles based in Honduras for cross-border strikes against Sandinista forces.

Nicaragua says a war with Honduras cannot be ruled out because the Hondurans not only refuse to bring the exiles under control but also are probably arming and guiding them with U.S. help and encouragement.

"What the United States wants to do is crush the Sandinista revolution," said an angry Nicaraguan diplomat here.

But U.S. officials believe that although more border clashes are possible, a war seems improbable at the

moment. In any case, officials say they have advised the Hondurans not to overreact by invading Nicaragua.

"Honduras' interests would be better served if it did nothing and waited for Nicaragua to strike first and then act as the aggrieved party in this case," one State Department official said.

"We are in frequent contact with the Hondurans," he added. "We are constantly reassuring them."

The charges and countercharges are visible evidence of the deterioration of U.S.-Nicaraguan relations after an apparent relaxation in tensions in April, when the United States offered an eight-point plan to improve strained relations between the two countries.

Washington recently insisted that Nicaragua, despite denials by Managua, was continuing to supply weapons to rebel forces in El Salvador. Nicaragua retorted that the United States was trying to arm Honduras so that the Honduran government could police Central America in the place of President Anastasio Somoza, overthrown as leader of Nicaragua by the Sandinista revolutionaries in 1979.

The hardened U.S. attitude toward Nicaragua was spelled out to the House Foreign Affairs Committee late last month by Nestor D. Sanchez, assistant secretary of defense for inter-American affairs, in testimony aimed at justifying U.S. military cooperation with Honduras.

"In Honduras," said Sanchez, "the Cuban-Nicaraguan coalition has been working very hard to prepare the groundwork for an eventual full-scale insurgency such as has been

sponsored in El Salvador. ... They have regularly and systematically violated the sovereignty of this peaceful nation [Honduras], using its territory as a supply conduit to support the guerrillas in El Salvador. ... The Cuban-Nicaraguan coalition seems ready to begin regionalizing the war."

Also last month, there were reports from the area of intensified border fighting. A few days later, the Pentagon announced joint military exercises with the Honduran army.

"All of these elements have forced us to realize the inevitable," said the Nicaraguan diplomat. "The United States is fortifying Honduras for a first strike against Nicaragua."

Late last week, Nicaragua's ambassador to Washington, Francisco Fiallos Navarro, called on the State Department with the protest note, which indirectly accused the United States of fomenting war.

It expressed Nicaragua's alarm at the U.S.-Honduras maneuvers because they coincide with an "increase in counterrevolutionary activities carried out against our territory" by former Somoza soldiers.

The maneuvers and recent published reports about a \$19 million CIA plan for covert anti-Nicaragua activities are "clear examples of the serious attempts to destabilize my country," the note said.

It added: "The ... maneuvers confirm the interventionist attitude of the United States toward the Central American region, and further represent a clear and open provocation which appears to be aimed at causing an unnecessary war between Honduras and Nicaragua, with unforeseeable consequences."