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CIA parachuting of contra saboteurs reported

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WASHINGTON—The CIA is parachuting specially trained contra commandos deep inside Nicaraguan territory to carry out sabotage missions, according to administration, congressional and rebel sources.

Armed with CIA-supplied intelligence data and old maps and blueprints of Nicaraguan installations culled from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers files, the commandos have struck at several

electrical power pylons, blacking out major portions of Nicaragua over the last two weeks, the sources said.

The contra paratroopers are being dropped inside Nicaragua from aircraft piloted by Nicaraguan, Belgian, Rhodesian and American crewmen working under contract for the Central Intelligence Agency, administration sources said. CIA officials direct the missions from command centers in Honduras and El Salvador and from ships stationed off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Nicaragua, the sources said.

Congressional intelligence oversight committees have been informed about the operations and have been assured that no CIA or U.S. government employees are involved in operations inside Nicaragua. Under U.S. law, government employees may not participate in military or paramilitary missions inside Nicaragua.

The idea of the contra parachute units was suggested by retired Maj. Gen. John Singlaub, a key contra supporter, to former CIA director William Casey, according to a Singlaub spokesman and an intelligence official. A

U.S.-trained commando units have knocked out at least seven high-tension electric towers, temporarily blacking out several Nicaraguan provinces, reliable sources in Nicaragua said.

In a protest note to Washington released Tuesday by the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry in Managua, Nicaragua labeled the most recent sabotage—two strikes Sunday on electrical towers near Nicaragua's southern border with Costa Rica—as “open terrorism designed to appear as propaganda strikes.”