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## 'Invasion'

**T**HE existence of "contra" bases and forces inside Honduras first broke into the public print officially in March of 1982, when the Nicaraguan government petitioned the Security Council of the United Nations to investigate "acts of provocation" allegedly committed along its northern frontier from Honduras.

On Nov. 12, 1982, the Honduran government denied the existence of camps of "exiles" inside Honduras, but it promised to take "appropriate measures" to prevent any hostile acts being committed against Nicaragua from Honduran territory.

On Jan. 4, 1983, Nicaragua wrote United States Secretary of State George Shultz protesting attacks from contra camps in Honduras into Nicaraguan territory and exhibited weapons allegedly captured from the contras.

These were early external signs of something going on along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border. The story first came out in early 1984, when between Feb. 25 and March 28 six neutral ships were damaged by mines in the approaches to Nicaraguan harbors. The mines had been planted by agents of the US Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA. Congress disapproved strongly and passed a law forbidding the use of American funds to support the counterrevolutionary forces operating against Nicaragua. (It condemned the mining, by votes of 84 to 12 in the Senate and 281 to 111 in the House.)

Since then the full story has been learned, mostly from former officials of the US government and from former members of the contra forces. The contra movement was organized, its people recruited, its camps built, and forces deployed by the CIA, beginning in 1981. The original contras were mostly officers of the National Guard from the Somoza regime.

They numbered about 2,000 men in late 1981 and early 1982, when they began raids into Nicaragua. They recruited as they raided. Their numbers have since expanded to somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000. (This does not include native Indians and another force of contras in Costa Rica which are not supported by the CIA.)

The raids gained in frequency and depth during 1984, but the raiders suffered a severe setback in early 1985, when the Nicaraguan government started using six helicopter gunships from the Soviets against the raiders. In the broadest sense the contras were on the offensive inside Nicaragua during 1983 and 1984, but were pushed to the defensive in '85.

There was excitement in Washington last week when it was reported that a Nicaraguan force had "invaded" Honduras.

Previous to the "invasion" of Honduras from Nicaragua, the contras from the camps in Honduras had been operating inside Nicaragua for more than three years, and in larger numbers than what Washington estimates to be the size of last week's reverse invading force.

Under international law it is the duty of a sovereign state to police its own territory and prevent hostile acts against others from being launched from inside its own borders. Honduras promised but failed to prevent the contra raids into Nicaragua.

In March 1916 Pancho Villa, a Mexican irregular leader, sortied in the United States, raided Columbus, N.M., set fire to the town, and killed 16 of its citizens. President Wilson responded by sending a US army of 6,000 men into Mexico, under Gen. John J. Pershing, in pursuit of Pancho Villa. They went 300 miles into Mexico, but never caught up with Villa. The American action was in "hot pursuit" of a brigand force which the government of Mexico could not control. The action deemed proper under international law.

If the American expedition into Mexico in 1916 was a legitimate response to a single incursion into its territory by a raiding force that Mexico could not control, then Nicaragua was entitled to respond in like manner to multiple incursions into its own territory from Honduras which Honduras was unable or unwilling to prevent.