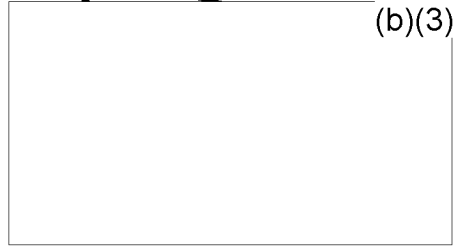




National Foreign Assessment Center

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# Latin America Review

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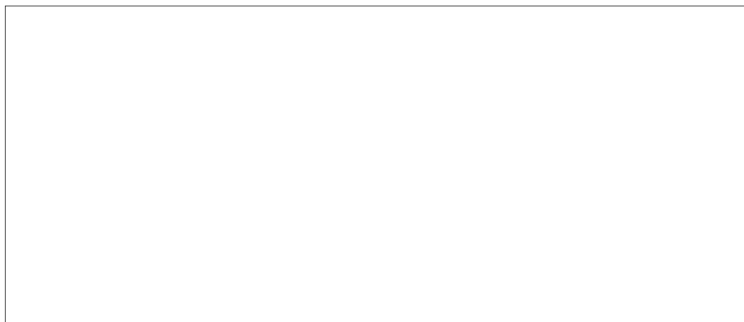
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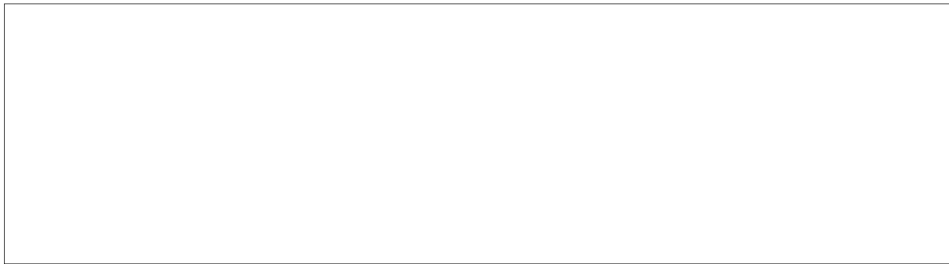
LATIN AMERICA REVIEW

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Nicaragua: External Support for the FSLN and for Somoza . . . . . 1

Both sides in the current conflict rely on varying degrees of cooperation or assistance from foreign sources--Somoza primarily in the form of arms purchases, and the guerillas for a wide variety of material and moral support.



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Nicaragua: External Support for the FSLN and for Somoza

Support for the Sandinistas falls into four principal categories:

- Longstanding Cuban support.
- Marginal but growing help from leftist and Communist groups in the region with the active encouragement of Havana.
- Recent Venezuelan and Panamanian aid.
- Passive--but important--involvement of Costa Rica.

The Cuban Role: Background

Since their formation in the early 1960s, the Sandinistas have looked to Cuba for ideological inspiration, strategic guidance, tactical training, material support, and sanctuary.

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Some aspects of Cuba's support role are well documented. Throughout the FSLN's existence, Cuba has been a training site; two years ago 60 Sandinistas were there in various stages of training. Cuba is also both a safe-haven and propaganda base; one of the guerrillas flown to Cuba after the December 1974 operation remained in Havana until earlier this year to act as FSLN liaison with the Cuban Government, to direct Sandinista propaganda over Radio Havana, and to contact representatives of other radical organizations. Sandinistas in Cuba may also be in contact with support groups in the United States and other third countries.

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10 In the last few years, however, Cuba appeared to  
 11 decline repeated Sandinista appeals for money, arms, and  
 12 increased training outside Cuba. Havana apparently con-  
 13 centrated its material support on training in Cuba and  
 14 related expenses, including transportation and documen-  
 15 tation. The Cubans became cautious in their dealings  
 1,3 with the FSLN because they were skeptical about the  
 group's capabilities and sensitive to international opin-  
 ion. Havana insisted that the FSLN first purge itself  
 of factionalism, establish a unified leadership base,  
 and prove itself under fire.

#### Cuban Promotion of Unification

1 Until the Sandinista surge of recent months, insur-  
 gent unification movements within the Central American  
 countries were primarily generated internally. Earlier  
 this year, however, Cuba stepped up its efforts to en-  
 courage unification of Central American guerrilla groups.  
 Cuban officials tried several times this year to set up  
 meetings in Costa Rica and Panama to help the Sandinistas'  
 Terciario (T), Popular Prolonged War (GPP), and Prole-  
 tarian Tendency (TP) factions iron out their differences.  
 During the World Youth Festival in Havana (28 July-5  
 August), the Cubans announced that the unification of  
 the three factions had been achieved.

More recently, new differences seem to have strained  
 the union. These highlight the divergent tactical ap-  
 proaches taken by each of the factions when they entered  
 the union. Given the growing domestic and foreign support  
 for the FSLN military campaign, the factions will probably  
 be able to maintain a working relationship.

#### Cross-Border Central American Guerrilla Cooperation

1 Until this year, cooperation among guerrilla groups  
 in Central America seemed limited. El Salvador's Fari-  
 bundo Marti Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), Guatemala's  
 Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), and Nicaragua's FSLN  
 evidently maintained some contact, but reports of co-  
 operation were few:

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- 1 -- In May 1977, EGP guerrillas kidnaped the Salvadoran Ambassador to Guatemala on behalf of Salvador's FPL.
- 23 -- In late 1977, four Salvadoran guerrilla instructors were reportedly in Guatemala to train some Communist Party members.

24 By the end of 1977, however, the Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan groups were developing stronger ties. The closest relationship still appeared to be between the Salvadoran FPL and the Guatemalan EGP, although much of their current activity is prompted by feelings of solidarity with the Nicaraguan insurgents, whom they credit with launching the revolution that could "liberate" all of Central America. In mid-September, the FPL--with the support of other Salvadoran groups--and the EGP were planning a series of coordinated and mutually assisted attacks against their respective governments' officials, US representatives, and businessmen. The Salvadoran guerrillas earlier fired on the US Embassy and were planning to target the US Ambassador, while the EGP was to attempt the same in Guatemala. These actions were intended to demonstrate solidarity with the FSLN, to keep the Salvadoran and Guatemalan Governments too occupied to go to the aid of Somoza, and to focus attention on the US, which the guerrillas believe is supporting the Nicaraguan Government.

1 Both the EGP's plans to assassinate the US Ambassador in Guatemala and the EGP's shooting of Nicaragua's Ambassador to Guatemala on 16 September appear to have been made at the specific request of the FSLN. The EGP is continuing actions in support of its Nicaraguan colleagues. On 27 September, the Nicaraguan airline (Lanica) office in Guatemala City was bombed; and on 28 September, the Office of the Permanent Commission of the Central American Defense Council (COPECODECA) was machinegunned.

29 In addition, several Sandinistas are stationed regularly in Guatemala and one EGP guerrilla and five Guatemalan "Red Berets"--a new group about which little is known--recently went to Nicaragua and reportedly fought alongside Sandinistas in an action near the Costa

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Rican border. An undetermined number of Sandinistas were reportedly in Guatemala in late September for strategy sessions, as well as to arrange for false documentation.

### Current Cuban Role in Central America

1 To some extent, the increased cooperation among Central American guerrilla organizations seems to be a result of Cuban efforts. Cuban officials pushed the idea of cooperative Central American insurgency and support for the FSLN at the World Youth Festival in Havana. They also sponsored a meeting of representatives from 15 Latin American insurgent organizations and urged them to stage dramatic operations in their respective countries to demonstrate their solidarity with the Sandinistas and to "distract" the US.

35 Guatemala's EGP and El Salvador's FPL have already undertaken the kinds of actions recommended by Cuba and are planning more. Ecuador's Socialist Revolutionary Party (PSRE) has reportedly planned an attack on the Nicaraguan Embassy in Quito, to be carried out with support from the Chilean Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR). The MIR also reportedly has a support apparatus in Costa Rica that helps train Nicaraguan guerrillas. Radical groups in Peru and Colombia are reportedly considering sending volunteers to Nicaragua to fight with the FSLN guerrillas. All the Central American guerrilla groups probably provide the Sandinistas with safesites, documents, and assistance in travel and border crossing.

In addition to lobbying the Latin American insurgent groups, Cuba made similar pitches during the World Youth Festival to Latin American Communist Party representatives.

1 [redacted] the Cubans said they were convinced the Sandinistas had the necessary ideological commitment and popular support to take on the Somoza government. Cuba asked the Communist Party delegates to give "financial, propaganda, and perhaps physical support" to the FSLN.

38 The Honduran Communist Party's (PCH) contact with the FSLN has grown since mid-1978 as a direct result of Cuban encouragement. [redacted] the Cubans "ordered" the PCH to provide the FSLN with [redacted] blank

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39 Honduran passports; whatever arms, radios, and recorders  
 40 could be collected; assistance in border crossings; and  
 safesites for Sandinistas who would be  
 arriving in Honduras, presumably from Cuba.

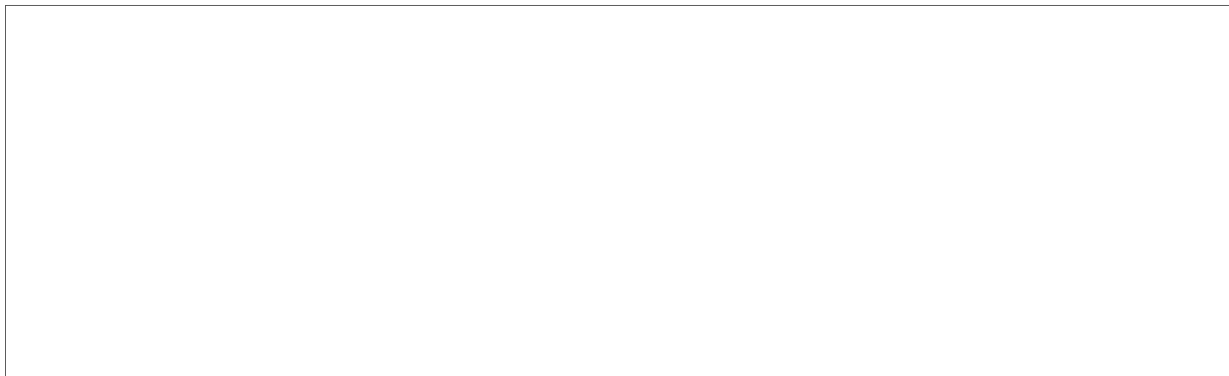
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41 The generally soft-line Communist Party of El  
 Salvador (PCES) has also reportedly initiated efforts to  
 provide money, food, clothing, equipment, and arms to the  
 FSLN. Committees of Solidarity with the Nicaraguan  
 42 People--generally FSLN front groups--are collecting funds  
 and propagandizing for the Sandinistas in Mexico, Vene-  
 zuela, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, and other Latin  
 American countries.

43 The Cubans reportedly promoted the consultative  
 working conference of the Communist parties of Central  
 America and Mexico and other leftist and anti-Somoza  
 groups that met in Panama City from 29 September to 1 Octo-  
 ber. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Nic-  
 araguan situation, and Havana was expected to continue  
 urging active support for the Sandinista guerrillas.  
 Given Cuba's enthusiasm for the FSLN cause, the tide of  
 international public opinion against the Somoza regime,  
 and the capacity of the Sandinistas to avert a definitive  
 military defeat by escaping to Honduran and Costa Rican  
 sanctuaries, it seems likely that the trend toward in-  
 creased cooperation among the Central American guerrilla  
 groups and support for the Sandinistas will continue.

Reports of a Cuban presence in Nicaragua are sus-  
 pect,\* but there is evidence that Havana has assumed a

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1 direct support role. The leader of the recent Sandinista assault on the National Palace in Managua appears to be one of some four dozen FSLN members who were supplied with Cuban passports in alias by the Cuban Embassy in Panama. And last year a Cuban Prensa Latina official in Venezuela was reportedly trying to help collect money for the FSLN.

61  
1 Cuba has been trying to playdown its involvement with the FSLN. [redacted] for example, Fidel Castro said that the Sandinistas know how to obtain arms and money and do not need Cuba's help. But Cuba's strong propaganda support for the Sandinistas demonstrates its interest in the possibility of a revolutionary renaissance in Central America. A solidarity rally was held in Havana in September and a recent feature article in Granma states that Central America now has all the conditions for a true revolutionary situation. The US Interests Section has commented that while Cuba makes abundantly clear its hope for a Sandinista success, it apparently wishes to keep its assistance hidden in order to discourage antiguerrilla intervention.

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60 A member of the Group of 23--which serves as the FSLN's political arm--reportedly visited Havana recently to request that Castro provide arms, money, and even direct military support. We believe that the Cubans may well increase their material support to the Nicaraguan guerrillas in the weeks ahead, but, unless there is a dramatic turn in the situation in Nicaragua, will stop short of sending Cuban personnel into Nicaragua.

#### Anti-Somoza Efforts of Venezuela and Panama

1 Venezuelan President Perez and Panamanian strongman Torrijos are both deeply--and at times emotionally--committed to efforts to help topple President Somoza.

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50 Following the Venezuelan and Panamanian decisions the week of 10 September to send aircraft to Costa Rica as a warning to President Somoza, President Perez and General Torrijos moved toward more active intervention. By 21 September, Venezuela had moved two C-130 transports and four Canberra bombers to Panama City and sent four T-2 light jet aircraft to David, in western Panama

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near the Costa Rican border. Panama's Air Force, normally located in the capital, had also moved almost entirely to David. Perez claims to have a pact with Cuba whereby Castro has agreed not to interfere but to leave it to Torrijos and Perez to bring down Somoza. Perez and Torrijos, in turn, have decided that if the FSLN can seize and hold territory in Nicaragua, both would recognize a provisional government established by the guerrillas.

Perez has met openly with members of the FSLN and the Group of 12.

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recently claimed that Perez turned over a large sum of money to Torrijos for passage to the Sandinistas.

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There are a convincing number of reports pointing to Torrijos' direct involvement with the guerrillas. In September,

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Torrijos promised to provide guerrilla training to the FSLN unit that went to Panama following the National Palace operation, but that the Sandinistas departed before any training took place. The Panamanian military also reportedly discovered a 30-man FSLN cadre training in Panama's western Chiriqui Province in August, but did not interfere with the group's return to Nicaragua. Direct arms support by the Panamanians, or with the Panamanians acting as middleman for Perez, also seems likely. Earlier this month, a chief Nicaraguan guerrilla commander was seen in Chiriqui Province loading what appeared to be munitions onto an airplane flown by a Panamanian Air Force pilot. the plane was being diverted from normal use for nightly flights into Costa Rica. have reported surreptitious shipments of small arms and ammunition for the Sandinistas.

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reports that Panama has covertly introduced troops into Costa Rica to help the Sandinistas regroup were confirmed on 23 September by Torrijos' admission to a US official that a Panamanian infantry company was in Costa Rica. Torrijos may also be helping to equip civilian volunteers recruited in Panama to fight in Nicaragua. Torrijos'--and Perez'--

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growing belief that support for the Sandinistas was the only way to avoid a worse bloodbath and a Castro-backed takeover, that Guatemala and El Salvador had already reinforced Somoza with men and materiel, and that the US diplomatic initiative was dead in the water led to Torrijos' unilateral warning to the US of an imminent attack on Nicaragua by Venezuelan and Panamanian forces.

Torrijos believes a hard prod is necessary to move the US to action. Added to this was his frustration as a military man, [redacted] his probably high personal regard for Commandante Pastora (the operational commander of the FSLN who had just met with him)

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[redacted] Torrijos also saw in the Nicaraguan situation an opportunity, along with Perez, to weigh in on the side of the angels against Somoza. Torrijos was, and probably still is, prepared to recognize a provisional FSLN government if the Sandinistas take and hold a piece of Nicaraguan territory for any length of time.

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#### Costa Rica's Role

Costa Rica continues to be the FSLN's principal, and critically important, staging area. FSLN raids from across the border have been a continuing thorn in the side of Somoza's counterinsurgency effort and a very important asset to the guerrillas and will probably remain so.

The FSLN attacks last October that began the offensive against the Somoza government were staged by groups that quickly fled into Costa Rica and Honduras before Nicaraguan National Guard forces could react. In November there were some 70 well-equipped Sandinistas operating from Costa Rica. A member of the FSLN high command has publicly acknowledged that the group uses that country as its principal training ground and safehaven. The Group of 12, prior to returning to Managua earlier this year, was based in San Jose.

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62 The FSLN's continued reliance on its safehaven was demonstrated by the raid launched from Costa Rica on 12 September and by the spectacular FSLN August raid on the National Palace also planned and staged from Costa Rica.

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64 The Sandinistas receive material aid from the Costa  
 65 Rican Committee of Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People  
 and are provided safehavens and false documents by the  
 Costa Rican Communist Party. Sandinistas have occasional  
 contacts in Costa Rica with Cuban officials and--  
 --with Soviet Embassy officials  
 as well.

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1 The FSLN has been able to operate from Costa Rica  
 with virtual impunity. Although Costa Rica has announced  
 that it is closing its border with Nicaragua, the govern-  
 ment is militarily incapable of policing the border area.  
 There is also a certain lack of incentive because the  
 Somoza government is unpopular in Costa Rica. In addi-  
 tion, some government officials may fear retaliation  
 from the FSLN. When Sandinistas fall into government  
 hands, they are deported to Mexico, Venezuela, or Panama.

57 [redacted] Costa Rican  
 President Carazo has decided to "stiffen" his policy on  
 FSLN activists apprehended in his country--by deporting  
 non - Costa Ricans and giving short jail sentences to  
 nationals. At best this would be only a slight shift  
 unlikely to have an appreciable effect on FSLN tactics.  
 So far there has been no evidence of a change. From  
 14-16 September, FSLN groups that encountered Costa Rican  
 security forces in the vicinity of the border were per-  
 mitted to proceed into Nicaragua to launch their attacks.

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#### Other Support

1 FSLN support groups and "international brigades"  
 have been formed by leftists in several countries, most  
 recently in Panama and Mexico. In Mexico, the Coordinat-  
 ing Office for Solidarity with Nicaragua concentrates on  
 disseminating propaganda. In Panama, 1,500 volunteers  
 allegedly signed up to fight in Nicaragua (obviously an  
 inflated claim) and an effort is also being made to form  
 an international brigade in Venezuela. Panamanian left-  
 ists are sponsoring a late September meeting of these  
 brigades and other pro-FSLN groups, primarily for propa-  
 ganda and coordination purposes.

In Honduras, the Honduran Communist Party, a Com-  
 mittee of Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People, students

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and faculty members of the national university, and a new leftist organization--the Popular Unity Movement--reportedly give moral and material support to the FSLN.

The FSLN operates out of sanctuaries in Honduras, but finds the atmosphere less hospitable than in Costa Rica. As many as 60 guerrillas were staging regular raids from Honduras into Nicaragua late last year, but the Honduran Army swept the border region in May to suppress these activities. In response to the recent fighting, the Honduran military again increased patrolling in the border area and has taken about 80 Sandinistas into custody. Like Costa Rica, Honduras deports captured Sandinistas to third countries

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There is also a Mexican FSLN Coordinating Committee but its activities have been limited. It is not, for example, willing to call publicly for volunteer brigades because it does not want to arouse the ire of the Lopez Portillo administration. The sparse information we have on Mexican support includes the following:

- In early 1978, Joaquin Cuadra Chamorro, of the Group of 12, said that he had met with Mexican President Lopez Portillo and Secretary of Government Reyes. Cuadra said the Mexican Government was providing important political and propaganda support to the effort to remove Somoza from power. Cuadra said the Mexicans had not yet provided any financial support, and he did not indicate that support to date had specifically included the FSLN.
- Ernesto Castillo, also of the Group of 12, in early January 1978 "intimated" that the FSLN had the sympathy of and a good relationship with the Mexican Government. He hoped that the Chamorro assassination would generate concrete assistance.

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-- The FSLN has members in Mexico, including Carlos Gutierrez Sotelo, whose farm near Cuernavaca is used for training and recuperation by Sandinistas. Because of Mexico's traditionally tolerant atmosphere, many far-left Latin American groups have chosen to set up exile operations there.

#### Foreign Support for Somoza

Nicaraguan President Somoza has several active and potential sources of foreign military support. [redacted]

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[redacted] and Argentina has become an important supplier during the past year. Closer to home, Guatemala and El Salvador are sympathetic to Somoza and might be willing to assist him politically as well as militarily--although there is no evidence that either government dispatched materiel to Nicaragua during the recent crisis. On the diplomatic side, Somoza can continue to count on the reluctance of most Latin American governments to become involved in any action that suggests intervention in Nicaraguan internal affairs.

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Argentina has been pushing military sales in Central America for more than a year and has given priority to Nicaragua. Last year, Argentina supplied Nicaragua with nearly \$1 million worth of 70-mm rockets and rocket launchers, as well as small arms. In March of this year, Argentina extended a \$20 million credit to Nicaragua, which Somoza opted to use for military equipment. In the same month, Nicaragua arranged to buy a range of Argentine-made weapons, including the Pucara counterinsurgency aircraft, rockets, and small arms.

With these sales in the pipeline, the Argentine Government might be inclined to look favorably on any

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Nicaraguan requests for military shipments if it concludes that Somoza will be able to maintain himself in power. Argentine leaders probably consider Somoza a victim of the US human rights policies that they also find vexing.

Somoza has the money and the connections to get help from private international arms merchants, but there is no evidence that he now is dealing with them. There is also a glutted Central American black market in arms.

4 In Central America, the Guatemalan Government has supplied arms to Nicaragua in the past and is probably Somoza's most likely nearby source of military and political support in a crisis. Last year, Guatemala sold 1.2 million rounds of M-1 ammunition to Nicaragua, as well as 5 million rounds of M-16 ammunition produced in Taiwan.

4 Guatemalan President Lucas does not have a particularly close relationship with Somoza, but he is a hard-line military officer who subscribes to the domino theory in Central America and wants to avoid the power vacuum he foresees if Somoza were to leave suddenly. Lucas would prefer a peaceful transition to a new regime in Nicaragua but doubts that a peaceful change is possible. He might supply Somoza with covert support if he thought that would help stabilize the situation.

1 The government of El Salvador is also sympathetic to Somoza and, under some circumstances, would probably send him aid. President Romero, like Lucas, is worried about the ripple effect if a radical regime came to power in Nicaragua. He heads a rightist government, and his empathy with Somoza is strengthened by the growing threat he faces from leftist terrorists in El Salvador.

1 Honduras, like Guatemala and El Salvador, wants to see Nicaragua's Sandinistas defeated militarily, but the cautious Hondurans are not likely to move ahead of their neighbors in supporting the Somoza government.

All three Central American countries have vigorously denied sending any reinforcements or supplies to Somoza during the recent crisis. Past practice, however, and

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the ties of regional solidarity and ideological affinity suggest that the Central Americans could be induced to supply materiel support discreetly. Under the most extreme conditions--with Somoza's National Guard on the verge of military defeat by the Sandinistas--these countries would seriously consider committing troops, probably in a coordinated effort.

On the diplomatic front, Somoza won sympathy by default in the OAS. To almost all Latin Americans, nonintervention is an all but sacred principle of the inter-American system. Paraguay voted against even the convening of a meeting of OAS foreign ministers to consider the Nicaraguan situation, and most Latin American countries were extremely reluctant to back any strong OAS action that smacked of intervention in Nicaragua's internal affairs.

Although Somoza has now agreed to a mediation formula by accepting the offer of [redacted] the US and others, Somoza almost certainly feels he won a tactical and facesaving victory in staving off strong multilateral action in the OAS meetings. [redacted]

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