

NICARAGUA

The First Five Years



edited by Thomas W. Walker

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The United States and Nicaragua

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As the insurrection against Somoza gathered momentum in 1978 and early 1979, the clear objective of U.S. policy was to prevent the FSLN from gaining a predominant position in a post-Somoza regime. Washington bent every effort to this end, with the sole exception of restoring large-scale military assistance to the National Guard—an option so at odds with the human rights emphasis of the Carter Administration's foreign policy that it was ruled out.¹

When the dynasty collapsed on July 17, 1979, U.S. policy shifted 180 degrees from an attitude of outright hostility toward the FSLN to one of cautious cordiality. The change was no less stark for having been forced by circumstances, since it carried with it the implication that even radical social and political change in Nicaragua did not necessarily endanger the vital interests of the United States.

Nevertheless, considerable tension born of mistrust lay below the surface of this peculiar friendship. The long history of U.S. support for the Somozas could not be wholly forgiven or forgotten by Nicaragua's new leaders, nor could they shake the fear and suspicion that Washington might yet concoct a counterrevolutionary scheme to rob them of their victory. In Washington, policymakers could not ignore the Marxist origin of many of the Sandinista leaders, even though Somoza's defeat had been engineered by a politically heterogeneous multiclass coalition. There was always the possibility that the guerrillas, having won power, would shed their moderate garb, dump their middle class allies, and steer the Revolution sharply to the left down the road of Cuban-style Marxism-Leninism.

Yet the interests of both Nicaragua and the United States lay in maintaining cordial relations if at all possible. Nicaragua was in desperate need of foreign assistance to rebuild an economy shattered by war. The United States had pledged to help in the recovery effort as part of the arrangements for Somoza's departure, but the maintenance of cordial relations was obviously a necessary condition for the fulfillment of that promise. Moreover, international assistance from Latin America, Western

Europe, and the international financial community would tend to follow the lead of the United States. A deterioration of U.S.-Nicaraguan relations would therefore have economic ramifications far beyond the aid dollars from Washington alone.

For the United States, maintaining cordial relations was a means of salvaging something from the failure to keep the FSLN out of power. Although, from Washington's perspective, the insurrection had been "lost," perhaps Nicaragua itself need not be. Policymakers in the United States set out quite consciously to avoid repeating the errors of 1959-60 when U.S. hostility drove the Cuban Revolution into alliance with the Soviet Union.

The Carter Administration's objectives were realistically suited to circumstances in which the United States had limited leverage. Washington recognized that the revolutionary coalition was inherently unstable. Once the overriding objective of defeating Somoza had been accomplished, the coalition was bound to deteriorate as it confronted the issue of what postrevolutionary Nicaragua should look like. The Sandinistas' "logic of the majority" could be pursued only at the expense of their upper and middle class allies, and that would inevitably produce conflict. Washington's objective was not to prevent such conflict, but rather to keep it within reasonable bounds, preventing a radicalization of the Revolution that would eliminate the private sector and any vestige of political pluralism.

In foreign policy, it was clear that Nicaragua would have a strong and friendly relationship with Cuba, the only country that had consistently supported the FSLN in its struggle against Somoza. Washington had no illusion that it could block a close relationship between Cuba and Nicaragua, but it hoped to minimize it, particularly in the military field. There was little doubt that the Sandinistas would support the Salvadoran guerrillas, since they had supported the Sandinistas during the insurrection against Somoza. But Washington hoped to restrain Nicaraguan involvement so that it would not constitute a major factor in the Salvadoran war.

During the first year of revolutionary government in Nicaragua, none of the worst fears of either side was realized. Despite conflicts between the FSLN and the private sector, capitalism was not abolished and pluralism, though not robust, survived. On occasion, U.S. Ambassador Lawrence Pezzullo acted as mediator between the government and opposition to prevent their disputes from escalating into apocalyptic confrontation.

Nicaragua's relationship with Cuba blossomed quickly as Cuba sent several thousand teachers, hundreds of medical experts, and scores of technical advisors (including some military personnel) to help Nicaragua reconstruct. The Sandinistas preferred Cuban military advisors to Panamanians, but their numbers remained relatively small.²

Finally, though there was evidence of arms flows from Nicaragua to El Salvador in early 1980, the amounts were not substantial. President Carter chose to interpret the intelligence findings generously, accepting the Nicaraguan government's assurances that any arms smuggling was being undertaken contrary to its policy. In September he certified to Congress, as required by law, that Nicaragua was not exporting violence to its neighbors and was therefore eligible to receive \$75 million in economic assistance.³

As the 1980 U.S. presidential election approached, the Carter Administration's efforts to moderate the Nicaraguan Revolution seemed reasonably successful. The Sandinistas understood the implicit "rules of the game" and generally abided by them. Nicaragua, Ambassador Pezzullo declared, was "an acceptable model" of revolution.⁴

THE REAGAN TRANSITION

The architecture of Carter's whole Central America policy began to collapse as soon as Ronald Reagan was elected president. Throughout the region, political forces on both the right and left began acting in anticipation of what Reagan's policy would be. The Republican Party platform called for halting U.S. aid to "Marxist" Nicaragua and helping the Nicaraguan people "restore democracy." Key Reagan advisors were on record attacking the Carter Administration for "losing" Nicaragua to communism and urging less reticence in the use of military force abroad to resist Cuban-Soviet expansion.⁵ In December the report of Reagan's State Department transition team was leaked to the press; at the top of a "hit list" of ambassadors slated for immediate replacement were Robert White in El Salvador and Lawrence Pezzullo in Nicaragua.⁶

In both Washington and Managua, virtually everyone expected the new administration to adopt a policy of hostility toward Nicaragua and to vastly increase U.S. military aid to El Salvador. The Salvadoran revolutionary movement sought to preempt Reagan by mounting a "final offensive" to depose the Salvadoran regime on the eve of Reagan's inauguration, thereby confronting him with a *fait accompli*.

For the arms to mount such an offensive the Salvadoran guerrillas turned to Cuba, Nicaragua, and the Eastern bloc. For Managua, the request posed a difficult dilemma. The Sandinistas had faced a similar supply problem prior to the final offensive against Somoza, and Cuba had helped fill the breach. Yet the issue of Nicaraguan aid to the Salvadoran insurgency was the most sensitive issue in Managua's relations with Washington. Though the Sandinistas had turned a blind eye to the Salvadorans' use of Nicaragua as a way station in their own arms smuggling operations, the Nicaraguans had refrained from making a major

commitment to the guerrillas in order to maintain their relationship with the United States.

The expectation that Reagan's policy toward Nicaragua would be a hostile one regardless of how the Sandinistas behaved diminished the incentive for moderation so carefully crafted by the Carter Administration. In November and December 1980, U.S. intelligence detected a major increase in the flow of arms into El Salvador from Cuba and Nicaragua.⁷

In its last few weeks in office, the Carter Administration was forced to respond to the unraveling of its Nicaragua policy, even though events had slipped beyond control through no fault of its own. The September certification that Nicaragua was not exporting revolution had been the subject of intense controversy within the administration, partly because the intelligence community had evidence of some arms flows even then, and partly because conservatives in the administration had hoped to block the certification until after the November election. In December 1980 and January 1981, as evidence of Nicaragua's complicity in the arms smuggling became unequivocal, the pressure to "decertify" became intense.⁸ In January the Carter Administration announced that it was suspending the \$15 million in economic aid not yet disbursed from the \$75 million aid package on the grounds that Nicaragua was shipping arms to the revolutionaries in El Salvador. By suspending the aid rather than canceling it, Washington held out the prospect that it might be restored if Nicaragua changed its behavior. That, however, would be a determination that would fall to President Reagan.

The Reagan Administration immediately seized upon Central America as a perfect issue with which to assert its new hard line foreign policy. Secretary of State Alexander Haig, anxious to establish himself as the "vicar" of foreign policy, declared the region to be a "test case" in the struggle with international communism.⁹ Haig's major concern was the defeat of the guerrilla insurgency in El Salvador; his metaphor of "drawing the line" against communism was apt, for Haig's policy was vintage containment.

The lesson Haig learned from Vietnam was that you must "go to the source" to defeat a guerrilla insurgency—that is, cut off external logistical support for the insurgents. But during the early weeks of the new administration, Haig was not irrevocably convinced that "going to the source" required military action; if external support for the Salvadoran Revolution could be ended by diplomatic means, that would do just as well.

Pezzullo was able to convince Haig that it was possible to reestablish the understanding between Nicaragua and the United States that had prevailed during the Carter Administration. With the proper mix of economic incentives and the specter of U.S. hostility, the Sandinistas could

be persuaded to halt their material assistance to the Salvadoran guerrillas. Pezzullo was so convincing that in February he was able almost single-handedly to defeat an effort by administration hard-liners to make the suspension of economic aid to Nicaragua permanent. Instead, the administration set a 30-day deadline for Nicaragua to end the arms flow into El Salvador.¹⁰

From Managua's perspective, the Reagan Administration was not acting quite as anticipated. Pezzullo had not been fired; on the contrary, he was insisting that the old rules of the game, if reestablished, could still form the basis of a workable relationship. The Salvadorans' final offensive had failed so dismally it was clear that there would be no victory there in the foreseeable future, and the Sandinistas' irritation at having been misled by the Salvadorans about their strength made Nicaragua amenable to Pezzullo's proposal. Nicaragua assured Washington that it would refrain from further aid to the Salvadorans, closed a clandestine Salvadoran radio station operating on the outskirts of Managua, and began to curtail the flow of weapons. By mid-March, U.S. intelligence indicated that the flow was much reduced, and the administration's 30-day deadline was extended because of Nicaragua's efforts to comply.¹¹

At this point Pezzullo's efforts were derailed by administrative hard-liners whose objective was not simply to contain the insurgency in El Salvador but also to roll back "communism" in Nicaragua. In late March they launched a second effort to cut off economic aid. Pezzullo was not informed until the decision had already been made, and it was leaked to the press before he had an opportunity to notify the Nicaraguans. The announcement of the aid cutoff was made, appropriately enough, on April Fool's Day. A few months later Pezzullo resigned his ambassadorship and retired from the Foreign Service.

Relations between Nicaragua and the United States stagnated for the next few months, but Central America returned to the top of the Reagan Administration's agenda in June when the Salvadoran guerrillas launched a surprisingly strong offensive that destroyed Washington's hopes for a quick military victory there. Once again, Haig was intent upon "going to the source," initiating the first of several attempts to convince Reagan of the need to blockade Cuba.¹²

With regard to Nicaragua, Thomas Enders, the newly installed Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, was prepared, like Pezzullo had been, to try to close the Nicaraguan arms channel by diplomatic means. He convinced a reluctant Haig to let him make the effort.¹³

In August 1981 Enders traveled secretly to Managua to open discussions with the Sandinistas. He set forth two basic conditions for an improvement in bilateral relations: Nicaragua must halt its support for the

Salvadoran guerrillas, which intelligence sources indicated was continuing, albeit at a level well below that of late 1980; and it must curtail its own military buildup, which had accelerated after the collapse of the Pezzullo initiative. In exchange, the administration would sign a nonaggression pact with Nicaragua under the terms of the Rio Treaty, make an effort to close exile paramilitary training camps in the United States, and ask Congress to restore economic aid to Nicaragua.¹⁴

The Sandinistas, deeply skeptical of Washington's intentions after the fiasco of February–March, did not respond positively to Enders's proposals. They denied supplying arms to the Salvadoran guerrillas and rejected any constraint on their own military posture as a violation of their sovereignty. They also regarded Washington's promises as hollow. The Rio Treaty already obligated the United States to refrain from the threat or use of force against Nicaragua, and the U.S. Neutrality Act prohibited training camps of the sort operating in Florida and California. If the Reagan Administration, the hard-liners were able to insist that Washington-international laws already on the books, of what value would any additional pledge be? The idea that Congress would restore economic aid was particularly farfetched, since only the most strenuous efforts of the Carter Administration had managed to get congressional approval of the \$75 million aid package in 1980.

Between August and October 1981, Nicaragua and the United States exchanged a number of communications on these issues. Within the Reagan Administration, the hardliners were able to insist that Washington's proposals be phrased in imperial language certain to irritate the nationalism of the Sandinista leadership. The only agreement that was reached was that each side would refrain from using incendiary public rhetoric against the other.

Even this thin thread was broken in October when the United States conducted an amphibious assault exercise with the Honduran Armed Forces as part of the Halcon Vista joint maneuvers. At the United Nations, Daniel Ortega denounced the exercises as a rehearsal for an attack on Nicaragua. Washington interpreted this as a violation of the agreement to suspend the war of words and on that basis broke off the diplomatic dialogue.¹⁵

Two years later, with the wisdom of hindsight, the Sandinistas wished they had been more receptive to the Enders proposal since, despite the language in which it was posed, it was close to Pezzullo's offer. By allowing their distrust of Washington and their offense at the proposal's style to divert them from its substance, they allowed the hard-liners in the Reagan Administration to defeat those who sought a diplomatic concordat. With the failure of the Enders initiative, Washington turned to the more traditional means of dealing with renegade Latins—brute force.

THE NOT-SO-SECRET WAR

In early October 1981 the Salvadoran guerrillas launched a major offensive against the government, scoring successes far beyond anything anticipated in Washington. While their June offensive had produced serious concern within the administration, their fall offensive set off a panic. A full-scale review of U.S. policy in Central America was undertaken; some, including Secretary Haig, warned ominously of the collapse of El Salvador unless the United States acted decisively. True to form, Haig still looked to the source, recommending direct military action against both Cuba and Nicaragua, if not El Salvador itself.¹⁶

Haig's call to war was opposed within the administration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs recommended against Haig's proposal to blockade Cuba on the grounds that it risked confrontation with the Soviet Union, would divert naval forces from more critical theaters around the globe, and would probably not achieve its professed objective of halting arms shipments to Central America. They also opposed direct involvement in El Salvador or Nicaragua, not wishing to enlist in a potentially unwinnable and politically unpopular ground war that could demolish the recently reconstituted congressional majority for a major strategic buildup.

In a series of National Security Council meetings in November, President Reagan approved a ten-point policy plan for Central America. Haig's proposals for direct military action were rejected; instead the United States would increase military aid to El Salvador and Honduras, expand the U.S. military presence throughout the Caribbean Basin by mounting large military exercises, expand the CIA's intelligence-gathering capacity in Central America, develop military contingency plans for the region, and initiate covert paramilitary operations against Nicaragua. In part, approval of covert operations against Nicaragua was a consolation prize for Haig, to ease the pain of his failure to convince Reagan of the need for direct military action.¹⁷

During the November National Security Council meetings, the CIA proposed a variety of covert operations. The least controversial was to continue a program of financial aid to internal opponents of the Sandinistas begun by the Carter Administration and expanded when Reagan first came to office. Recipients of this largesse reportedly included opposition labor organizations, political parties, press, and the private sector. A second program, also approved without opposition, was to expand U.S. intelligence-gathering capabilities in Central America as a whole.¹⁸

Among the paramilitary operations proposed, the most ambitious called for the CIA to assemble, train, and arm a commando force of 500

Latin Americans, mostly Cuban exiles, to conduct military operations against Nicaragua from base camps in Honduras. The primary mission of this force would be to attack Nicaragua's economic infrastructure in the hope that the resulting economic hardship would produce political destabilization. It was also suggested that such a force would enable the United States to take "paramilitary action against special Cuban targets" in Central America. The initial budget for this option was reportedly \$19.95 million.¹⁹

A second paramilitary option, proposed as a complement of rather than an alternative to the first, called for the United States to provide financial and logistical support for an Argentine effort, already underway, to train 1,000 Nicaraguan exiles for the purpose of overthrowing the Nicaraguan government.²⁰

A third more limited option involved funneling military aid, particularly small arms, through the Honduran Armed Forces to Nicaraguan exiles already operating along the Nicaraguan-Honduran border. This may have been simply an extension of a paramilitary operation approved in March 1981 to interdict arms flows from Nicaragua to guerrillas in El Salvador and Guatemala.²¹

The CIA's paramilitary plans touched off a heated debate within the Reagan Administration over the goals of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua. Some officials argued that the program of covert operations should be aimed at overthrowing the Sandinista government. Others, including some officials from the State Department, the Defense Department, and even the CIA itself, argued that the objective of U.S. policy should be the more limited one of interdicting the flow of arms from Nicaragua to the Salvadoran guerrillas. This second group argued that efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas would inevitably entangle the United States in a partnership with the remnants of Somoza's National Guard—an association that would allow the Sandinistas to rally popular opinion in their favor. They also warned that efforts to depose the Sandinistas could spark a wider regional war, drawing the United States into direct military involvement.²²

After an extended debate within the administration, President Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive 17 as well as a December 2, 1981, Presidential Finding that granted the CIA broad authority to conduct covert political and paramilitary operations against Cuba and Cuban supply lines in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America, and to cooperate with other governments to accomplish this.

The CIA was authorized to proceed with the creation of the 500-man commando force, to assist Argentina in the creation of a larger army of Nicaraguan exiles, to establish direct liaison with exile groups based in Honduras, and to work toward the creation of a broad political opposition

front to the Sandinistas. Those in the administration who sought to overthrow the Sandinistas won a victory; all the operations initially proposed were approved. Those who thought a program to overthrow the Sandinistas would be counterproductive managed to salvage something, though. The objective of the paramilitary programs approved by the president was defined as the limited one of interdicting arms flows, and it was to be implemented without giving direct assistance to the former National Guardsmen.²³

When the CIA's program of covert operations was presented to the Intelligence Committees of Congress, many members voiced concerns similar to those that had been debated within the administration. There was strong bipartisan opposition to creating the 500-man commando force to attack "special Cuban targets." As a result, this aspect of the operation was apparently dropped. In addition, the intelligence committees approved guidelines restricting the objective of the paramilitary operations to arms interdiction.²⁴

Like most policies that are arrived at through a process of bureaucratic bargaining and compromise, the elements of the CIA's covert operation against Nicaragua were not entirely consistent with one another. In order for the United States to avoid involvement with Somoza's Guardsmen, Argentina was slated to supervise the creation and operation of the exile army, and to act along with Honduras as a conduit for military supplies.²⁵ It made little substantive difference, however, whether U.S. aid to the contras was provided directly or laundered through Honduras and Argentina. Moreover, while the United States was supposedly limited to interdicting arms, Argentina was explicitly creating an exile army in order to overthrow the Sandinistas, and the exiles themselves were, of course, dedicated to that same end.²⁶ Finally, within the Reagan Administration itself, operational control over the covert war fell to people who had, from the outset, advocated getting rid of the Sandinistas rather than simply containing them.

The Falklands/Malvinas war brought these inherent problems to the surface. When Washington sided with Great Britain, Argentina began to withdraw from Central America. As Argentina withdrew, the United States gradually assumed control over the operations that Argentina had begun—providing arms, money, and training to the expanding exile army in Honduras. To stay within the original guidelines of the policy (which prohibited direct U.S. aid to the exiles) an elaborate system was constructed so that U.S. efforts could be handled through the Honduran Armed Forces. But this arrangement could not conceal the fact that the United States had assumed the central role in the covert war in the wake of Argentina's withdrawal.²⁷

The covert war was the most important element in the administration's policy of hostility toward the Sandinistas, but it was by no means the only

one. As the exile army was being assembled, the administration mounted a campaign to cripple the Nicaraguan economy by cutting off external sources of financing. The Sandinistas inherited an economy devastated by war and bankrupted by Somoza's larceny. They faced a Herculean task of reconstruction at a time of global recession that, under the best of circumstances, would have meant hardship for an underdeveloped export economy like Nicaragua's. During the first two years of revolutionary government, the Sandinistas received crucial financial aid from international financial institutions, Latin America, Western Europe, and the United States.

The Reagan Administration halted bilateral aid to Nicaragua almost immediately. As the policy of hostility unfolded in late 1981 and early 1982, the administration moved to cut off other sources of bilateral and multilateral assistance as well. To discourage private businesses in the United States from investing in Nicaragua or trading with the Sandinista government, Nicaragua was excluded from the programs of the Export-Import Bank (which provides short-term credits to facilitate trade) and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (which offers insurance for U.S. companies investing abroad). To discourage private banks from loaning to Nicaragua, the U.S. government's Inter-Agency Exposure Review Committee, which rates underdeveloped nations' creditworthiness, downgraded Nicaragua's rating in early 1983 from "substandard" to "doubtful"—despite the fact that Nicaragua was at that time on schedule with its repayment of the massive external debt inherited from Somoza.²⁸

From November 1981 onward, the United States voted against all loans to Nicaragua in both the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank on the dubious grounds that the macroeconomic situation in Nicaragua was so bad that development loans could not be used effectively. In general, the United States was outvoted when loans came up for review, but when serious objections to a loan are raised in these banks, the normal procedure is to defer consideration of it. The size of the U.S. contribution to the banks gives the U.S. representative considerable political leverage. The exercise of that leverage to block loans to Nicaragua caused sharp controversy within the banks, but the fact remains that loans to Nicaragua virtually ceased. In 1979 Nicaragua received \$179 million from the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank; in 1983 it received only \$30 million.²⁹

Following the model established by the CIA's successful destabilization of the Allende government in Chile, the Reagan Administration's credit blockade was combined with a program of economic sabotage. Beginning in mid-1982, the exile raids from Honduras targeted economic resources—farms, bridges, warehouses, and so on. In 1983 the CIA took direct control of major sabotage operations, carrying out the successful attack on the oil storage facilities at Corinto on October 11, and a series of

speedboat attacks on shipping in Nicaraguan harbors. In January 1984 the CIA escalated its campaign to disrupt shipping by mining Nicaragua's major ports, but the mining operation brought forth such a firestorm of criticism from Latin America, Western Europe, the U.S. Congress, and the World Court that it was subsequently halted.³⁰

In addition to the covert war and the effort to strangle the Nicaraguan economy, the Reagan Administration's policy of hostility also included a major political offensive with several distinct elements: explicit threats of military action designed to intimidate the Sandinistas; vociferous denunciations of the Nicaraguan regime designed to build domestic political support for the administration's overall Central American policy; and diplomatic efforts to isolate Nicaragua from both its neighbors and potential friends in Western Europe.

In the last week of November 1981, both Haig and Presidential Counselor Edwin Meese warned that although Reagan had ruled out the use of U.S. troops in Central America, other military actions, including a naval blockade of Nicaragua, were still being considered. The rhetoric grew so intense that Mexican president José López-Portillo was moved to describe it as "verbal terrorism" and to warn that a U.S. attack on Nicaragua would be "a gigantic historical error."³¹

At the Organization of American States (OAS) meeting in St. Lucia in December, Haig invoking the Rio Treaty, called for joint hemispheric action to block Nicaraguan and Cuba subversion. He also repeated the warning that the United States would do whatever was "prudent and necessary" to prevent any nation in Central America from becoming a "platform for terror and war."³²

At home, the Reagan Administration launched a public relations campaign to portray Nicaragua as a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship guilty of gross human rights abuses, a pawn of Cuba and the Soviet Union, and the primary source of external support for the Salvadoran insurgency. United Nations Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick led the assault on Nicaragua's human rights record, characterizing the regime as a totalitarian dictatorship "even more repressive . . . than was the dictatorship of Somoza." Secretary Haig focused on Nicaragua's alleged assistance to the Salvadoran guerrillas. In March he charged that the Salvadoran insurgency was being run out of Managua.³³

By far the most impressive element of the administration's public relations campaign against the Sandinistas was a press briefing conducted jointly by the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency. The briefing was organized to convey the drama of the Cuban Missile Crisis. It was conducted by the same analyst, replete with aerial reconnaissance photographs labeled in the same way as the famous missile sites two decades earlier. The thrust of the briefing was that Nicaragua had undertaken a major military buildup with Cuban and Soviet assistance, a buildup so far

beyond normal defense requirements that it must be intended for aggressive use against Nicaragua's neighbors.³⁴

The substance of the briefing was not very compelling. The most ubiquitous photographic evidence was "Cuban-style obstacle courses" at various Sandinista military bases. Absent from the briefing was any evidence that the Nicaraguans had introduced major new weapons systems or that they were systematically channeling arms to the Salvadoran guerrillas. As the Nicaraguans were quick to point out, they had never denied that they were strengthening their military or that they were receiving military aid from the socialist bloc; what did the United States expect, Sergio Ramírez asked, when Washington was fomenting counter-revolution?³⁵

The aerial briefing, for all its theatrics, was fundamentally disingenuous. The administration was fully aware that the Sandinistas had neither the capability nor the intention of invading their neighbors, and that their military buildup was, as they claimed, defensive. Administration spokesmen, in a classified version of the aerial briefing given to the House Intelligence Committee, admitted as much.³⁶

The administration's public relations campaign collapsed a few days later when the State Department arranged a press briefing to display a Nicaraguan soldier allegedly sent to command guerrilla forces in El Salvador. The young Nicaraguan, captured the previous year in El Salvador, recanted his story as soon as briefing began. He claimed that he had gone to fight in El Salvador on his own accord, and that the story of his being ordered there after training in Ethiopia was entirely fabricated—a product of torture at the hands of the Salvadoran armed forces. The debacle produced an immediate suspension of the administration's campaign to rally domestic opinion.³⁷

On the diplomatic front, the administration sought to isolate Nicaragua from its Central American neighbors and to reduce West European support for the Sandinistas. In early 1982, France announced that it had agreed to sell \$16 million of military equipment to Nicaragua. The administration was outraged. Under U.S. pressure, France delayed shipment of the military supplies and agreed not to make any additional sales.³⁸ Similar pressures were brought to bear on other West European countries, not only to prevent arms shipments to Nicaragua but to reduce economic support for the Sandinistas as well. This effort was only partially successful. No further military equipment went to Nicaragua from Europe, but significant amounts of economic assistance continued to flow.

In Central America, the United States organized the Central American Democratic Community, composed of Costa Rica, Honduras, and El Salvador. The explicit objective of the new organization was to seek joint measures to counter Nicaragua, but the whole enterprise was so transparently a creation of the United States that it faded quickly into oblivion after its initial meetings.

The administration combined these diplomatic moves with military actions designed to intimidate the Sandinistas. In addition to the constant drumbeat of rhetoric about Nicaraguan subversion and the willingness of the United States to counter it with force, the administration undertook a massive military buildup in Honduras. From fiscal year (FY) 1980 to FY 1984, U.S. military aid to Honduras rose from \$3.9 million to \$78.5; the number of U.S. military personnel stationed there (apart from troops participating in exercises) rose from 26 to 346; and the United States built or planned to build 11 military installations at a total cost of \$87.85 million.³⁹ All of this was justified to Congress as necessary to counter the threat of aggression from Nicaragua.

But the most dramatic efforts at intimidation were the U.S. military exercises mounted in Honduras and off Nicaragua's coasts. Beginning with the relatively small Halcon Vista joint maneuvers with Honduras in October 1981, the implicit or in some cases the explicit purpose of all the exercises was to "pressure" Nicaragua by demonstrating the ability of the United States to project military force into Central America. The exercises grew larger and longer in duration; by 1984 they had become virtually continuous, leading some congressional critics to conclude that the exercises were a facade for the permanent stationing of U.S. forces in the region.

THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

As the U.S. policy of hostility toward Nicaragua unfolded, Mexico became increasingly fearful that the conflict in Central America might spiral out of control, leading to direct U.S. intervention. To avert such a catastrophe, President López-Portillo on several occasions offered Mexico's good offices as an intermediary between Nicaragua and the United States. In December 1981 Haig traveled to Mexico City to confer with López-Portillo, and the Mexicans agreed to convey the Reagan Administration's concerns to Nicaragua.

Mexico's mediation led to a meeting between Haig and Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto in St. Lucía just prior to the OAS General Assembly. Haig raised the two issues that had been discussed by Enders in the August-October exchanges—Nicaragua's arms buildup and its aid to the Salvadoran guerrillas—but he also added a new issue: U.S. concern over the decline of political freedom inside Nicaragua. D'Escoto repeated earlier Nicaraguan denials that it was aiding the Salvadorans or that it had any intention of acquiring MIG fighter aircraft—a charge that had been made repeatedly by administration spokesmen. Little more than a restatement of positions on both sides, the meeting had no salutary effect.⁴⁰

The Mexicans, however, were not prepared to give up. Having failed

in their attempt at quiet diplomacy, they launched a more public effort. Speaking in Managua in late February, López-Portillo warned of the "three knots of tension" in Central America: the conflict in El Salvador, the hostility between the United States and Nicaragua, and the hostility between the United States and Cuba. He offered Mexico as mediator to help launch negotiations around each of these issues.

Nicaragua, Cuba, and the Salvadoran opposition quickly accepted the López-Portillo initiative. The United States was less interested. President Reagan, in a major address to the OAS given the week after López-Portillo's proposal, made no reference to the Mexican plan. Administration spokesmen told the press that no improvement in relations with Nicaragua were possible until the Sandinistas stopped aiding the Salvadoran guerrillas.⁴¹

Congress, however, responded positively to the Mexican initiative; 106 members of the House of Representatives signed a letter to Reagan urging him to accept the Mexican plan. The administration was forced at least to pronounce its receptivity to the initiative, lest it appear to be the major obstacle to peace in the region. After a series of meetings between U.S. and Mexican officials, the administration finally agreed to allow Mexico to convey the U.S. position to Nicaragua. The agenda of U.S. concerns was essentially the same as what Haig had presented to D'Escoto in December. Nicaragua responded immediately that it was willing to discuss all the issues raised by the United States and set forth an agenda of its own as well. The United States, however, was not prepared to begin discussions until after the Salvadoran election in late March.

The Salvadoran election was a benchmark for U.S. policy in Central America. With the war in El Salvador going badly, the administration had wagered a great deal on the outcome of the elections. They would, it was hoped, convince the Congress to continue its support of administration policy. In that regard at least, the election proved to be a great success. In their wake, the administration's attitude toward Nicaragua hardened perceptibly. U.S. officials told reporters that the administration would not open direct discussions with Nicaragua until it halted its aid to the Salvadoran guerrillas, regardless of the Mexican proposals. Yet even this position was something of a façade. One official explained the administration's attitude toward the López-Portillo initiative: "We were cool to the initiative from the beginning, but we were effectively ambushed by Congress and public opinion. We had to agree to negotiate or appear unreasonable."⁴²

In fact, the administration had no interest in negotiating with Nicaragua. The text of a National Security Council planning document written during this period summarizes U.S. policy as stepping up pressure on Nicaragua, isolating Mexico, and "coopt[ing] the negotiations issue." No mention is even made of the López-Portillo initiative.⁴³

Contacts between Nicaragua and the United States under the auspices of the López-Portillo plan limped along until August 1982, with Nicaragua constantly urging that negotiations be started and the United States refusing. Finally, in August the administration abandoned even this pretext; Nicaragua's diplomatic note of August never received a reply.

During July and August 1982, Nicaraguan exiles launched a series of major attacks against Nicaragua from their base camps in Honduras. As rumors of war between Nicaragua and Honduras swept the region, President Herrera Campins of Venezuela and López-Portillo appealed to Nicaragua, Honduras, and the United States to take swift diplomatic action to avert the outbreak of war. It was the first joint Mexican-Venezuelan initiative on Central America and marked a change from Venezuela's previous support of U.S. policy.

The Mexican-Venezuelan letter proposed measures to reduce the border tensions between Nicaragua and Honduras and urged the United States to upgrade its diplomatic contacts with Nicaragua. Once again, congressional support for the initiative was strong. President Reagan's response, however, was noncommittal. In his reply to Herrera Campins and López-Portillo, he reiterated U.S. policy and the proposals made a few weeks earlier at a meeting of the Central American Forum for Peace and Democracy—a successor to the Central American Democratic Community and, like its predecessor, a creation of U.S. diplomatic efforts to isolate Nicaragua. Without the support of the United States, nothing came of the Mexican-Venezuelan initiative.

CONGRESS AND THE COVERT WAR

The covert war against Nicaragua changed in several important ways during the summer and fall of 1982, and these changes produced a growing concern in Congress about the ultimate intent of U.S. policy. As Argentina gradually withdrew from the region in the wake of the Falklands/Malvinas war, the CIA assumed control over the exile army that Argentina had been constructing. The military assistance provided by the United States transformed the exile forces from a ragtag collection of small, independent groups numbering fewer than 1,000 men in total into a well-equipped and professionally trained army of some 4,500 by July 1982. Calling itself the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), it increased the size and frequency of its forays into Nicaragua during the summer of 1982.⁴⁴

Most of the attacks came across the eastern and central portions of the Nicaraguan-Honduran border, far from the purported arms-smuggling routes in the west. This, combined with the contras' disclaimer that they were trying to interdict arms, made it difficult for the Reagan Administration to keep up the fiction that the purpose of the covert war was to interdict arms flowing from Nicaragua to the Salvadoran guerrillas. In the

fall of 1982 the administration changed the basic rationale for the covert war, at least as it was presented to Congress. Direct arms interdiction was replaced by the stated objective of harassing and punishing Nicaragua in order to convince the Sandinistas to end their support for the Salvadoran insurgency. As one administration official explained, "it became clear that cutting the roads from Nicaragua was not enough. It was necessary to raise the cost to the Sandinistas and the Cubans of meddling in El Salvador."⁴⁵

In practice, harassment meant exile attacks on border towns, economic targets, and Nicaraguan army posts—exactly the sorts of operations originally proposed by the CIA in November 1981 to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, and rejected for that reason. With this change in U.S. strategy, the line between harassing Nicaragua to get the Sandinistas to behave and trying to overthrow them became difficult to discern since the operations being mounted served either purpose equally well. In practice, the line disappeared completely since both the U.S. officials running the operations and the contra commanders carrying them out were dedicated to deposing the Nicaraguan regime. By the fall of 1982, the contra army in Honduras was already three times the size of the CIA invasion force at the Bay of Pigs. By mid-1984 it would be almost ten times as large.

As the covert war widened, both the House and Senate Intelligence Committees began to worry that the operation was spiraling out of control. In an effort to hold the CIA to its original objective of arms interdiction, the committees added language to the Classified Annex of the 1983 Intelligence Authorization Act prohibiting U.S. aid to paramilitary groups "for the purpose of overthrowing the Government of Nicaragua or provoking a military exchange between Nicaragua and Honduras."⁴⁶

This language, signed into law in August 1982, was not designed to bring the covert operation to a halt. On the contrary, it was intentionally crafted to register the Intelligence Committees' unease while at the same time allowing the covert war to continue. The Reagan Administration was able to interpret it as allowing support for the contras so long as the purpose of the United States was not among those proscribed by the law. The administration continued to assert that its purpose was merely to halt the flow of arms, so even though the recipients of the CIA's largesse were trying to overthrow the Sandinistas, the law did not make them ineligible for assistance.

This mild restriction remained a secret until December when Representative Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) offered an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill (which included appropriations for intelligence activities) to prohibit U.S. assistance to any group involved in paramilitary actions against Nicaragua. Representative Edward Boland (D-Massachusetts), Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, offered as a substitute for Harkin's amendment the language that had earlier been

included in the Intelligence Authorization Act. The Republican leadership, seeking to avoid a vote on the Harkin amendment, supported Boland's substitute, which passed 411-0 and was eventually signed into law.⁴⁷

The administration continued to expand the covert war during the early months of 1983, and the issue returned to the top of the congressional agenda as the war escalated. In March, 1,500 exile troops invaded Nicaragua. Though they were thrown back to Honduras, the new attacks prompted a series of stories in the U.S. press documenting the continued U.S. involvement in training, financing, arming, and advising the exiles.⁴⁸

The new revelations convinced several members of Congress that the administration's real intention was to overthrow the Sandinistas, in violation of the Boland amendment. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-New York), Vice-Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, reported that a number of his colleagues on the Committee shared that suspicion. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont), traveled to Central America on behalf of the Intelligence Committee to investigate U.S. operations and upon his return said that it appeared to him the administration was ignoring the intent of Congress. Representative Wyche Fowler (D-Georgia) conducted a similar investigation for the House Intelligence Committee and returned with the same conclusion. Finally, Boland himself declared that the evidence was "very strong" that the administration was violating the amendment bearing his name.⁴⁹

The pervasive and growing congressional suspicion of the administration's conduct of the covert war led the House Intelligence and Foreign Affairs Committees to propose the Boland-Zablocki amendment to the 1984 Intelligence Authorization Act, an amendment that effectively cut off all funds for the covert war against Nicaragua. On July 28, after several days of bitter debate, the House of Representatives passed the Boland-Zablocki amendment by a vote of 228-195.⁵⁰

The Republican majority in the Senate, however, was not prepared to halt the war. Eventually, the House and Senate reached a compromise whereby the administration received \$24 million (about half its initial request) to keep the covert war going from October 1983 to June 1984. In June the administration returned to Congress seeking an additional \$21 million, which the Senate again approved. The House, however, was willing to compromise no further; the administration was unable to secure additional funds for the war during 1984. A final congressional review of the issue was slated for March 1985.

The congressional rebellion against the covert war was rooted in a variety of issues: the ineffectiveness of the operation in achieving its stated goals, its counterproductive effects, its tenuous legality, and, perhaps most important, the apparent contempt in which the administration held congressional prerogatives.

The ineffectiveness of the covert war in actually interdicting arms

shipments from Nicaragua to El Salvador was apparent early on—no significant amount of arms was ever captured. Virtually no one even within the administration was willing to argue that the operation could actually overthrow the Sandinistas. Moreover, the operation seemed counter-productive in a number of ways. It tended to polarize the internal political situation in Nicaragua, contributing to a reduction of political freedom for the opposition while at the same time rallying the population in support of the Sandinistas. Internal economic difficulties could be, and were, rationalized as the fault of the United States and its Somocista allies. In effect, all the warnings articulated by people within the Reagan Administration who had initially opposed a major commitment to the covert war came true.

Internationally, the covert war angered U.S. allies in Latin America and Europe, and raised the danger of open warfare between Nicaragua and Honduras—a war the Honduran economy was in no shape to sustain. Moreover, the covert war was such an obvious violation of U.S. treaty obligations under the OAS Charter, the Rio Treaty, and the United Nations Charter that the standing of the United States in the international community as a whole suffered considerably as the war intensified.

But the issue that ultimately led the House of Representatives to repudiate the war was one of institutional prerogatives. The quality of the administration's reporting to the Intelligence Committees was so poor that members simply stopped believing what they were told. Their efforts to restrain the operation were ignored or circumvented by convoluted interpretations of the law, until they felt there was no alternative but to bring the whole operation to a halt.

PREPARING FOR WAR

By early 1983, the Reagan Administration's Central American policy was in crisis. The war in El Salvador was slowly but surely being lost to the guerrillas, the contras had made no military progress against the Sandinistas, and the U.S. Congress was growing restive at the ever-escalating cost of a policy that had yet to show any signs of success. This crisis produced a showdown inside the administration between the relative moderates in the State Department, led by Enders, and the hard-liners in the White House, led by National Security Advisor William Clark and U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick. Various tactical and strategic policy differences divided the two factions, but perhaps the most fundamental issue was whether the United States could prevail in Central America through a strategy of containment (that is, winning the war in El Salvador and containing Nicaragua), or whether the United States would have to roll back "communism" in Nicaragua by removing the Sandinista regime. The

hard-liners won, Enders was fired, and the State Department lost control over policy in Central America to the National Security Council, the CIA, and the Department of Defense.

The practical effect of the hard-liners' victory was quickly apparent. In August, just after the House of Representatives voted to halt the covert war, the United States launched Big Pine II, the largest and longest military exercise in Central American history. It lasted seven months and at its height, two carrier battle groups stood off the shores of Nicaragua. The Pentagon also announced a series of further exercises that, taken together, meant virtually continuous maneuvers through 1988. Displaying a sardonic sense of humor, the administration dubbed the exercises after Big Pine II as Granadaro I, no doubt to remind the Sandinistas that the invasion of Grenada began as a naval "exercise."⁵¹

The newly ascendant hard-liners moved to step up the covert war as well. The CIA was authorized to expand the contra forces to 15,000 men—an army larger than the National Guard the Sandinistas defeated in 1979. It was also at this point that CIA operatives took direct control of sabotage operations against Nicaraguan ports and oil storage facilities.⁵²

The intensification of the war was accompanied by an intensification by other countries of the search for peace. In January 1983, Mexico and Venezuela joined with Panama and Colombia to form the Contadora group (named for the Panamanian island where it first met). Fearful that the United States was moving inexorably toward direct military intervention, the four nations hoped their joint efforts might succeed at finding a diplomatic solution for the Central American crisis. In a number of meetings with the foreign ministers of the five Central American nations, the Contadora states made some modest progress. In September the Central American nations, meeting under the auspices of Contadora, reached agreement on 21 objectives in the areas of security, economic cooperation, and politics. In January 1984 these principles were spelled out in greater detail, and working groups were formed to draw up formal accords for implementing them.

In the area of security, where agreement was most difficult to achieve, the basic objectives of Contadora were to remove Central America as much as possible from the East-West rivalry, and to begin to demilitarize the area. The 21 points called for a prohibition on foreign military bases and troops, a reduction of foreign military advisors, a halt to the regional arms race, and an end to external support for insurgencies.

Despite verbal support for the process, the posture of the Reagan administration was a major obstacle for Contadora. In the first place, the United States continued its military buildup in Honduras and El Salvador, as well as its support for the contras, despite the fact that these actions ran counter to the objectives espoused by Contadora. Moreover, the United States consistently held that any diplomatic agreement would have to be

both multilateral and comprehensive—that is, all the Central American nations would have to agree on all issues before any agreement on any issue could be concluded.

Although the United States had no direct participation in Contadora, its influence in Honduras and El Salvador gave it the ability to effectively block any agreement that did not suit its policy. The Reagan Administration insisted that a necessary part of any agreement would be a verifiable pledge by the Sandinistas to hold free and fair elections that met Washington's definition of pluralism.⁵³

Until June 1984, the administration consistently refused to reply to Nicaraguan diplomatic initiatives, characterizing them as Sandinista efforts to subvert Contadora. In June, however, the United States suddenly reversed itself and agreed to begin bilateral talks with Nicaragua. Those talks lasted until early 1985, when they were abruptly terminated by the United States.

As the United States entered its own 1984 election campaign, the policy of the Reagan Administration toward Nicaragua seemed to be consolidated and well-defined: to depose the Sandinista government. Indeed, administration spokesmen, including the President himself, had come close to saying so explicitly on several occasions. Deputy Secretary of Defense Fred Ikle called repeatedly for "military victory" for the "forces of democracy" in Central America, and he warned that the continued existence of the Sandinistas would require a partitioning of Central America analogous to the partitioning of Europe.⁵⁴ President Reagan referred to the contras as "freedom fighters" at every opportunity and announced his doubt that peace could be restored to the region as long as the Sandinista government survived.⁵⁵ Finally, the Kissinger Commission, which offered the most complete rationale for Reagan's Central American policy, concluded that a policy of "static containment" toward Nicaragua was unacceptable, that the Sandinistas would remain a permanent threat to peace in the region unless the character of the Nicaraguan regime were changed. The Commission held out the vague hope that the Sandinistas might somehow agree in negotiations to remove themselves from power but, failing that, it noted that force would remain the "ultimate recourse" for achieving U.S. objectives.⁵⁶

The Reagan Administration's dilemma, however, was how to implement this policy. The covert war, under growing attack in the Congress, had not succeeded in posing any serious military threat to the Sandinistas. The economic embargo had damaged the Nicaraguan economy but had not brought it to collapse. The other nations of Central America showed little interest in reviving the Central American Defense Council as an instrument for use against the Sandinistas. In short, Reagan's policy of hostility seemed incapable of achieving its goal. By late 1984 it seemed clear that the second Reagan Administration would have to face the choice of tolerating

the Nicaraguan Revolution or intervening directly and massively to exterminate it.

NOTES

1. For a detailed discussion of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua during the insurrection, see William M. LeoGrande, "The United States and the Nicaraguan Revolution," in *Nicaragua in Revolution*, edited by Thomas W. Walker (New York: Praeger, 1982), pp. 63-77.

2. For a more detailed discussion of Cuban relations with Nicaragua during the first year after Somoza's fall, see William M. LeoGrande, "Cuba and Nicaragua: From the Somozas to the Sandinistas," in *The New Cuban Presence in the Caribbean*, edited by Barry B. Levine (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1983), pp. 43-58.

3. *Review of the Presidential Certification of Nicaragua's Connection to Terrorism*: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 96th Cong., 2d sess., September 30, 1980 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980).

4. *Newsweek*, July 20, 1980.

5. See, for example, Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary*, November 1979, pp. 34-35; and the Committee of Santa Fe, *A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties* (Washington, D.C.: The Council, 1980).

6. *New York Times*, December 11, 1980.

7. The administration made its case public with the release of U.S. Department of State, *Communist Interference in El Salvador*, Special Report No. 80, February 24, 1980. This report so exaggerated the available evidence that it was severely criticized in the press. The two major critiques appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, June 8, 1981, and the *Washington Post*, June 9, 1981.

8. *New York Times*, September 13, 1980.

9. *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, February 29, 1981.

10. *Washington Post*, March 3, 1981.

11. *Washington Post*, March 13, 1981.

12. *Washington Post*, April 29, 1984.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Washington Post*, March 4 and 16, 1982.

15. *Ibid.*, and *New York Times*, December 3, 1981.

16. Haig's recommendations are discussed in the *New York Times*, November 11, 1981. The objections to them from the military are discussed in the *Washington Post*, March 4, 1982.

17. *Washington Post*, March 4, 1982.

18. For details of the programs approved in early 1981, see *Newsweek*, November 2, 1982, and the *New York Times*, April 8, 1983. Regarding the less-controversial elements of the program approved in December 1981, see the *New York Times*, March 14, 1982, and March 11, 1983.

19. *New York Times*, March 14, 1982. The *Times* obtained copies of both the option papers developed by the CIA for the National Security Council meetings in November and the Presidential Finding signed by Reagan in early December. See also *New York Times*, March 17, 1982, and *Washington Post*, March 10, 1982.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Washington Post*, February 14, 1982; *New York Times*, November 2, 1982; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 16, 1983.

22. The elements of this debate are recounted in the *New York Times*, December 4 and 19, 1982.
23. *New York Times*, March 14, 1982, and April 8, 1983; *Washington Post*, March 10, 1982; and *Newsweek*, November 2, 1982.
24. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 16, 1983.
25. *Newsweek*, November 2, 1982.
26. *New York Times*, March 14, 1982, and April 8, 1983.
27. *Ibid.*; and *Newsweek*, November 2, 1982.
28. *Washington Post*, March 25, 1984.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Wall Street Journal*, April 6, 1984; *Christian Science Monitor*, May 4, 1984.
31. For examples of rhetoric from Haig and Meese, see the *New York Times*, November 23, 1981. López-Portillo's reaction is reported in the *Washington Post*, November 25, 1981.
32. The text of Haig's OAS address is reprinted in the *New York Times*, December 5, 1981.
33. *New York Times*, February 21, 1982, and March 5, 1982.
34. The text of the briefing is included in the *New York Times*, March 10, 1982.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *U.S. Intelligence Performance on Central America*, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, House of Representatives (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982).
37. *Washington Post*, March 13, 1982.
38. *Washington Post*, January 8, 1982.
39. *United States-Honduras Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Central American Historical Institute, 1984).
40. *New York Times*, December 3, 1981.
41. *Washington Post*, February 24, 1982.
42. *New York Times*, May 10, 1982.
43. The text of the document is printed in the *New York Times*, April 7, 1983.
44. *Newsweek*, November 2, 1982.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Congressional Record*, August 11, 1982, p. H9156.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. H9148-H9159.
48. See, for example, the stories in the *New York Times*, April 3, 1983, and the *Washington Post*, April 3, 4, and 5, 1983.
49. Senator Moynihan's views were reported in the *New York Times*, April 1, 1983; Senator Leahy's in the *Washington Post*, April 8, 1983; and Congressman Boland's in the *New York Times*, April 14, 1983.
50. *Ibid.*, July 29, 1983.
51. *United States-Honduras Relations*.
52. *Wall Street Journal*, April 6, 1984; *Christian Science Monitor*, May 4, 1984.
53. William Jesse Biddle, *U.S.-Nicaragua Talks: Going Through the Motions* (Washington, D.C.: Center for International Policy, 1983).
54. Remarks by Fred C. Ikle, September 12, 1983, News Release, Department of Defense.
55. *New York Times*, April 12, 1984.
56. *Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984).