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U.S. Warned Congress of G.I. Role in Nicaragua

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 26 — The Reagan Administration, as part of its effort to persuade Congress to renew aid to anti-Sandinista rebels, argued that continued financing of the guerrilla force was necessary to avoid the risk of sending American troops to Nicaragua, according to testimony recently made public.

Langhorne A. Motley, then Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, told a closed session of a House Appropriations subcommittee on April 18 that the rebels, widely referred to as the contras, were preventing the governing Sandinista Front from consolidating a Marxist-Leninist regime in the Cuban style and that if rebel military activities should be terminated it might become necessary to send American troops.

"What we have tried to do in designing this program, the contra program, is create two do-not-wants," Mr. Motley said, "because that is what the American public, as we understand it, and the President don't want — they don't want a second Cuba, that is, a Marxist-Leninist state. And they don't want a second Vietnam, U.S. combat troops bogged down without a clear purpose."

"If you knock down one half of that," he continued, "say Nicaragua is going Marxist-Leninist and continues to subvert its neighbors — it does not have the motivation not to do so — then the other side of the equation doesn't hang up either."

Arguments Used by Shultz

He said that leads to "a possibility that under some circumstances the United States may have to get involved."

Secretary of State George P. Shultz, in a speech on May 23, used some of the same arguments that Mr. Motley used before the subcommittee. He said that if the United States failed to aid the rebels now it would eventually have to make "an agonizing choice about the use of American combat troops" in Central America.

Mr. Motley, who resigned from the State Department at the end of April

and returned to private business, spoke in response to questions from subcommittee members about a secret Presidential report supporting the request for \$14 million in renewed aid to the Nicaraguan rebels.

During the hearing, Representative Norman D. Dicks, a Washington Democrat, quoted a portion of the report as saying that "if the military assistance to the contras is defeated . . . this option would be lost, placing us in an accommodationist or military response dilemma at some later date when the threat to U.S. interests become more obvious and when the only effective response would be on a larger scale or in less favorable circumstances."

"Now that means military involvement by the United States Government," said Mr. Dicks. "Isn't that what you are saying?"

"It means the possibility of it," Mr. Motley responded. "It may reach that point. Yes."

The Administration lost a battle for military aid for the rebels in April, but two months later — after Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega Saavedra angered many members of Congress by leaving on what was said to have been a long-scheduled visit to Moscow — it won approval for \$27 million in nonmilitary assistance.

The Central Intelligence Agency had provided financial support, supplies and advice to the Nicaraguan rebels until ordered by Congress to cease all support a year ago. In the last year, however, the largest rebel group, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, nearly doubled in size, from about 9,000 fighters to an estimated 16,000 to 17,000, and its leaders raised private funds in the United States and abroad estimated variously at \$15 million to \$25 million.

The director of the C.I.A.'s Office of African and Latin American Analysis, John Helgerson, told the subcommittee that analysts for the agency "have consistently underestimated the determination of the contras, not only to continue fighting, but we did not expect that they would continue to win recruits in the absence of any outside support. I think it is a testimony to their appeal and the lack of the appeal of the Sandinista regime that this movement has continued to grow."

'Real Problem in the North'

Mr. Helgerson predicted that in six months the Sandinistas would "face a real problem in the north because of their policies — it will wind down, but there will be no precipitous collapse." Mid-October would be six months from the time he spoke.

Asked about the sources of rebel financial support since the termination of C.I.A. backing, Mr. Helgerson said he believed that about a million dollars had been provided by Cuban-Americans and several million dollars from American corporations and what he described as conservative action groups. He said aid had also come from individuals in Central and South America. He said the C.I.A.'s information was "fragmentary" and based largely on news reports.

In addition to the possible need to send American troops, Mr. Motley and C.I.A. officials used a number of other arguments to justify aiding the rebels during their appearances before the panel, the Subcommittee on the Department of Defense. The transcript of the discussions, with large portions

deleted on the grounds that they were classified, were published recently by the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. Motley, again responding to questions about statements in the secret Presidential report, warned that the United States might have to substantially increase its outlay in military assistance to other Central American countries if it did not support the guerrillas.

"If you don't like \$14 million for aid in a budget deficit year, try and increase \$500 million for military assistance to Central America," he said. "I think we are being realistic in looking at what Congress will vote, and what will come forth. I can see the arguments in the committee."

He said United States military costs for friendly Central American governments totaled about \$3.2 billion a year in fiscal 1984 and 1985 and "could" rise to \$4 billion if the Nicaraguan rebels were not supported. He said the figure was an amalgamation of estimates from the Defense and State Departments and the C.I.A.

Asked whether Congressional rejection of aid for the rebels would lead to an increase in Soviet involvement in the region, Mr. Motley said that it would, but not "a dramatic 15 freighters steaming into the harbor — what I see really is what Robert Frost used to call free verse: playing tennis with the net down."

"The message that they will receive is 'Go ahead and keep your supplies up, go ahead and keep helping the insurgencies of different countries, the United States has shown it doesn't really want to face up to this.' It will be a process of erosion. It won't be a big dramatic action such as tanks marching out of Managua headed for Tegucigalpa, but it will be over a period of time."

It was also argued that other Central American countries and some South American countries needed to see signs of American resolve in dealing with Nicaragua.

Some of the Congressmen, in response, argued that the Reagan Administration ought to cease trading with Nicaragua as one way of showing resolve.