

U.S. plans invasion of Nicaragua

Marines are the most efficient option, says State Department

A high-level State Department official, Charles Smith of the Latin American Policy Planning Staff, bluntly stated in an interview last week that the basic premise of Carter administration policy toward Nicaragua is a U.S. invasion—under whatever cover. “Obviously, the most efficient thing,” Smith said when asked about U.S. policy options towards the civil war in that country, “is to send in the Marines. We have to work back from that.” An Organization of American States “peace-keeping mission” or “mediation” is probably necessary to politically cover for U.S. intervention, Smith specified, but whichever way, “we will see action soon.”

Smith's comments reflect the highest policy-making levels of the Carter administration: Smith is deputy assistant to Luigi Einaudi, the State Department's director of Latin American Policy Planning, who is presently heading a behind-the-scenes interagency government task force charged with drawing up the administration's policy options for Central America.

The interview with Smith (reprinted on page 52) blows apart the Carter administration's claims that it is “neutral” in the civil war in Nicaragua, and has not and will not provide any military support for Somoza's forces. As Secretary of the Treasury Werner Blumenthal repeated in a letter to Representative Henry Reuss (D-Wisc) last week, Carter policy is premised on the position that “the current government of Nicaragua has been, and is, for better or worse, the recognized authority in that country. “Blumenthal's assessment, stated in justification of U.S. support for the International Monetary Fund's loan to Nicaragua in May, will be backed up by Marines within two to three weeks, according to Smith.

No more Mexicos

Washington's attempts to portray the Sandinista-led opposition as “radical guerrillas” more dangerous than Somoza are fast losing credibility. The Sandinistas and their collaborators within the National Patriotic Front (NPF) constitute in fact a government in the wings based on principles identical to those embodied in the Mexican and American revolutions. Already, the NPF has designated a five-man provisional executive to

replace Somoza. According to the National Patriotic Front's program, the foundation of this government is a national commitment to the rapid industrial development of Nicaragua based on a national development plan and constitutional guarantees for the material and cultural improvement of the living standard of the population at large.

A Sandinista victory would be a severe blow to Washington-enforced IMF hegemony throughout Latin America, where the majority of military regimes are increasingly resorting to Somoza-style practices as IMF conditionalities become more and more draconian.

This is the “threat” Washington and the IMF intend to obliterate, and this week the Carter administration began feverish preparations to create the necessary climate for an OAS invasion. On June 9 the State Department leaked its objectives in a front page article in the *Washington Star*. Among the options being considered by the White House, says the *Star*, is calling for “an emergency meeting of the Organization of American States to obtain approval for a military intervention similar to the Inter-American Peace Force which imposed peace and a democratic government in the Dominican Republic” in 1965. Almost three-quarters of that “inter-American” force consisted of U.S. Marines.

Simultaneous with the *Washington Star* leak, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the U.S. policy mouthpieces began to report that it appears Somoza will continue to “hang on” indefinitely, leading to a bloody stalemate in the civil war. The implication is that under such conditions, the OAS would have to be brought in to impose a “ceasefire.” “We've got to get the Latin Americans to do it,” a source close to U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young commented, adding that there is “no way” the U.S. public will tolerate “sending in the Marines” openly.

This illusion of a “lull” in the fighting is exactly what the State Department wants. “Once there's a lull they [the OAS] could intervene between the two sides,” the source linked to Einaudi commented. “We'll see some action soon. In two or three weeks everyone is going to be battle-fatigued.”

The State Department has already begun a concert-

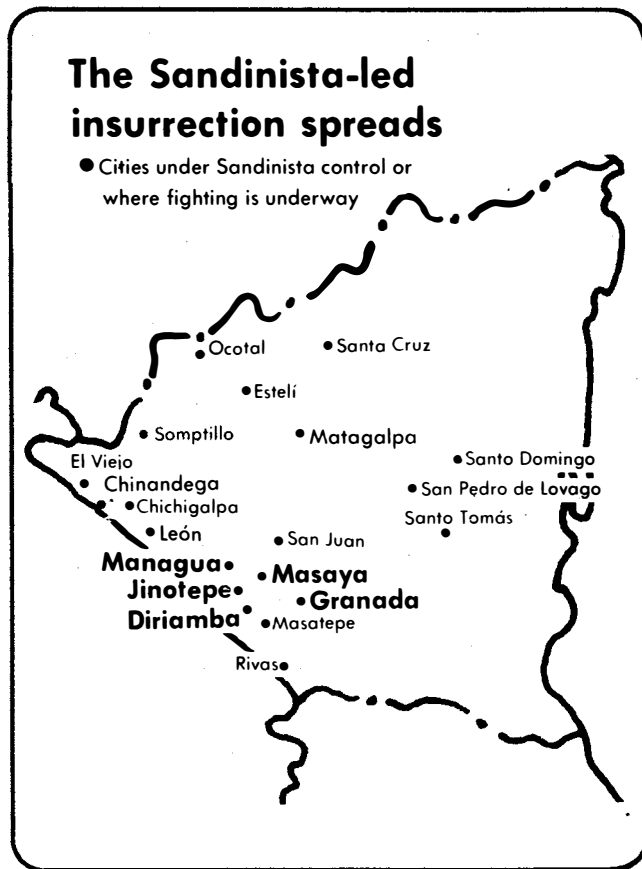
ed campaign to line up the necessary rubber stamp votes for the OAS intervention. William Bowdler, State's special envoy who conducted the farcical "mediation" talks between Somoza and a few U.S.-approved "opposition leaders" last fall, is now touring Latin American capitals to get things in place. Already he has deployed the foreign ministers of Ecuador and Venezuela to meet with Somoza, setting the first precedents for imposing a so-called international solution in the name of the Andean Pact and the OAS.

On June 11, Carter's national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, interviewed on Meet The Press, called for "free elections" to be held in Nicaragua under OAS troop supervision! Secretary of State Vance then called for an OAS meeting to discuss a "political solution" to the conflict that would prohibit any "radical solution" from arising.

Vance's "ceasefire" means foreign intervention as much as Brzezinski. "There is no way a moderate alternative to Somoza can stand without enormous military support from the U.S.," said one source at Kissinger's Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "And I don't mean covert either."

The size of such support? The State Department says Somoza already has some 20-25,000 troops, a figure that adds up to 10,000 soldiers more than the known strength of the National Guard, which is around 15,000—suggesting there have been up to 10,000 mercenaries and "volunteers" smuggled into Nicaragua in recent months from Condeca, other Latin American countries, and the United States. Yet not only is this not enough to smash the popularly-supported Sandinistas, says the Department, but it is doubtful that another 25,000 troops could do the job.

The severity of Washington's predicament is vividly illustrated by reports on conditions in the Nicaraguan capital of Managua, which provide an accurate portrait of the rotting tyranny. The only locations in the city that have avoided direct rebel attacks are Somoza's personal bunker in the National Guard garrison and the Intercontinental Hotel, where half of Somoza's cabinet has been holed up for more than a week. Whole areas of the city are without electricity, including the area where the U.S. embassy is located. All access roads to the capital are in Sandinista hands. When Washington ordered the evacuation of official dependents, they could not even make it to the airport, as the roads were



blocked with Sandinista barricades. U.S. citizens were finally hurried out under cover of darkness to an airstrip at a nearby banana plantation. The international airport itself was in danger when one of Somoza's air force pilots defected and turned the guns of his plane against air force headquarters there.

The Carter administration is rapidly approaching the point at which it may have to get rid of Somoza himself in order to preserve "somocismo." He could easily be replaced by a coup from his own officers, says the State Department, which would then pave the way for an OAS-backed "transition" period of "peace-keeping." As the Department source cited above stated, the National Guard "might just shoot him. If I were in the National Guard, that's what I would do."

—Chris Curtis
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