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ARTICLE APPEARED ON PAGE 2.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
10 March 1982

Red bases in pix of Nicaragua

By LARS-ERIK NELSON

Washington (News Bureau)—The Reagan administration yesterday published highly detailed spy-plane photographs to document what it described as a Soviet and Cuban-aided military buildup in Nicaragua.

Adm. Bobby Inman, deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, said the leftist Sandinista government in Managua was trying to build up a regular army of up to 50,000 men and was laying the foundation for a sophisticated air force that would be the most powerful in Central America.

The Nicaraguans have justified their military buildup by citing continued resistance from exiles who supported dictator Anastasio Somoza.

Nicaragua, Inman said, "is achieving force levels far in excess of what is required for its self-defense." What United States intelligence witnessed, he added, was "believe me, exactly the same pattern" as what had occurred in Cuba in the early 1960s, when the Soviets began to arm Fidel Castro.

A SERIES OF SLIDES, shown to journalists in a Vietnam war-style briefing, depicted the lengthening of Nicaraguan airfields and the construction of "standard Soviet-style" military camps, with obstacle courses, running tracks and parade grounds.

The photographs, taken by manned reconnaissance planes over Nicaragua, were so detailed that briefer John Hughes, described by Inman as the "premier photo interpreter in the U.S. intelligence community," said he could detect the chinning bars on the exercise fields. Hughes was the briefer who had explained the arrival of Soviet missiles in Cuba 20 years ago.

The slides showed three types of military activity in Nicaragua:

- The construction of military garrisons at 36 sites. Hughes said the construction followed the standard Soviet and Cuban pattern of a rectangular enclosure divided into three equal sections for garages, barracks and training fields. At one site, on Lake Managua, the photo showed a mockup of an airport that could be used to train guerrillas in how to attack aircraft on the ground.
- The lengthening of runways at four Nicaraguan airfields. Hughes said the construction appeared to be intended to allow Mig-21 fighters with full bomb loads to use the fields. Nicaragua currently does not have any Mig-21s, but 50 pilots are undergoing extended flight training in Cuba and Bulgaria.
- The destruction of Indian villages near the border with Honduras. The photographs showed that even churches had been burned to the ground. Nicaragua has said that it relocated 8,500 Indians away from the border but has blamed the destruction of the villages on raiders from Honduras. Inman said the destruction was too complete to have been the work of isolated raiders.

The photographs also showed the deployment of Soviet T-55 tanks and armored personnel carriers. Hughes said the Nicaraguan armed forces were provided with heavy-duty military ferries that would allow the tanks to cross rivers.

He said Cuba currently has 2,000 military and security advisers in Nicaragua and 4,000 other teachers and advisers. Inman said 50 to 70 Soviet officers were providing high-level military guidance to the Nicaraguan army. ■

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