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NICARAGUA VICTIMS TIED TO RECRUITING

U.S. Officials Say Insurgents Are Attracting Volunteers

By PHILIP TAUBMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 3 — Government officials said today that two men killed when Nicaragua shot down a rebel helicopter were American mercenaries apparently recruited by rebel sympathizers to make up for the withdrawal of official American aid.

The two men, who were killed on Saturday, have not been identified.

The officials said that the recruitment effort was intended to raise money and attract military advisers as American aid declined because of Congressional opposition.

Nicaraguan rebel representatives in the United States, while denying that they had recruited mercenaries, said they were trying to raise funds in Miami, New Orleans, Los Angeles, San Francisco and other cities with Hispanic populations.

Nicaragua said the rebel helicopter had been shot down after it and four small planes had attacked a military training school in Santa Clara, near the Honduran border, killing four children.

Today the Nicaraguan Government made public a photograph of one of the three men aboard the rebel helicopter who died in the incident. He is a light-haired, white male who reportedly died from a bullet wound in the head after the craft was shot down. American officials said he might have shot himself to avoid being captured.

On Sunday, Defense Minister Humberto Ortega Saavedra said the light-haired man was suspected to be an American intelligence agent working with the rebels.

The bodies of the two other men were burned beyond recognition, according to Nicaraguan authorities. They said no identification had been found on any of the bodies.

The deaths, apparently the first American casualties in the three-year insurgency against the Sandinista Government, have once again focused attention on the rebels and their links to the Central Intelligence Agency.

Congressional concern about aid to the rebels, fueled in part by fears that the loss of American lives could draw the United States into a more direct military confrontation, has increased during the past year. The House has voted four times since last summer to cut off support for the rebels.

Moynihan Expects an Inquiry

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the New York Democrat who is vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said today that the panel would investigate whether the C.I.A. had any connection with the mercenaries.

He said he had been assured by the agency that it was not associated with the men and was abiding by prohibitions against involving any Government employees, or anyone working on contract for the Government, in military activities inside Nicaragua.

The agency told Senator Moynihan on Sunday that the two men came from a group of seven that traveled last week from New Orleans to Honduras to join the rebels. The Senator said intelligence officials had also informed him that the helicopter was on a reconnaissance mission after a rebel ground attack on a military outpost in Santa Clara.

Rebels

He said in an interview on Sunday that he assumed the C.I.A. learned about the men and the incident from rebel leaders and that he did not believe that the knowledge suggested that the agency was somehow involved.

"Our committee is going to have to get answers but, for the moment, I think our Government is leveling with us," Senator Moynihan said today in an interview on the CBS Morning News.

Later he said in an interview, "These people have names, they had to get visas to go to Honduras, the C.I.A. should be able to get all this and get it quickly."

He said the agency's deputy director for operations, Clair E. George, told him today that it still did not know the identities of the two men or the names of the five others who traveled to Honduras last week.

As the $24 million that Congress approved for rebel operations has run down, the rebel group known as the Nicaraguan Democratic Force has intensified its activities in the United States. It has placed advertisements in newspapers appealing for aid.

Alfonso Callejas, a rebel leader who lives in Miami, said today that the insurgents had not paid anyone to advise them on military matters, but had received assistance from a number of private Americans he described as "voluntary advisers."

Periodic Trips to Honduras

He said that the Americans, most of them military veterans, visited Honduras periodically to advise the rebels. He said he did not know whether the men killed on Saturday, or the five others who traveled from New Orleans last week, were in that category.

"All I know is that we do not use mercenaries," Mr. Callejas said.

United States Government officials said the Nicaraguan rebels had also received official and private aid from Israel, Taiwan, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Rebel representatives have been most active in Miami and New Orleans because those cities have large Nicaraguan communities, according to rebel leaders. One representative said the rebels had used New Orleans as a departure point for travel by private American advisers to Honduras.

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