STAT Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2010/07/15 : CIA-RDP90-00552R000404560003-1

LONDON DAILY TELEGRAPH
23 April 1983

ONLY IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.

BY SUSAN MORGAN

DAILY TELEGRAPH: LONDON (INDEPENDENT PRESS SERVICE)

TEGUCIGALPA: HONDURAS - ''THIS IS A SECRET VIETNAM:'' OBSERVED THE CREWCUT YOUNG CIA OPERATIVE WEARING REGULATION DARK GLASSES.

A LOGISTICS EXPERT: HE SAID HE WAS HERE ON SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT FROM HIS BASE IN PANAMA TO HELP SET UP A SOPHISTICATED BATTERY OF RADAR AND METAL DETECTORS AND THOUSANDS OF LISTENING DEVICES ALONG HONDURAS' 400-MILE BORDER WITH NICARAGUA.

THE EQUIPMENT IS DESIGNED TO MONITOR THE ALLEGED ARMS FLOW FROM NICARAGUA VIA HONDURAS TO LEFT-WING REBELS IN EL SALVADOR: TO SPY ON NICARAGUA AND TO FOLLOW NICARAGUA'S WAR AGAINST AN EXILED FORCE OF NICARAGUAN REBELS.

IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE HERE THAT THE CIA IS BACKING THIS FORCE OF SOME 7,000 GUERRILLAS: WHOSE AVOWED AIM IS TO TOPPLE NICARAGUA'S LEFTIST SANDINISTA REGIME WITH MONEY: LOGISTICAL SUPPORT: INTELLIGENCE AND TRAINING.

THE CIA IS NOT ALLOWED BY U.S. LAW TO UNDERMINE FOREIGN REGIMES: ALTHOUGH IT CAN WORK TO DISRUPT ARMS SHIPMENTS TO SALVADOREAN REBELS. HOWEVER: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO OPERATIONS HAS DEGENERATED INTO SEMANTICS.

OVER DINNER AND DRINKS: EIGHT MEN WHO SAID THEY WORKED FOR THE CIA SPOKE FREELY ABOUT THEIR JOBS IN HONDURAS (TALK INTERSPERSED WITH NERVOUS QUESTIONS OF ''YOU AREN'T A REPORTER ARE YOU?'').

MOST HAVE BEEN BASED HERE IN WHAT IS NOW WASHINGTON'S SPY CENTER FOR CENTRAL AMERICA FOR 18 MONTHS: AND SAID THEY EXPECTED TO BE HERE FOR ANOTHER FIVE YEARS.

THEY BOASTED OF THE CACHES OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION THEY PROVIDED THE REBELS: OF THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THEY HANDED OVER TO THEM: OF HOW THEY WENT DOWN TO THE ''FRONT LINE'' EVERY DAY AND OF HOW THEY ''KICKED ASS'' WHEN TRAINING THE GUERRILLAS.

ASKED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE NICARAGUAN ARMY COUNTERATTACKED: ONE SAID THERE IS SO MUCH ULTRA-SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT ON THE BORDER THAT ''THEY WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE. WE'D KICK THEM INTO THE NEXT WORLD.''

HE ADDED THAT BECAUSE OF THE BAD PUBLICITY OVER VIETNAM ''WE HAVE TO BE VERY SECRETIVE. WE AREN'T EVEN SUPPOSED TO BE HERE.'' BUT HE ADDED THAT HE FELT HIS GROUP HAS THE FULL BACKING OF THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION.

CONTINUED

Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2010/07/15 : CIA-RDP90-00552R000404560003-1