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Guerrilla Hero Blames CIA for His Cease-Fire

Eden Pastora, the charismatic hero of the Sandinista revolution that overthrew Anastasio Somoza four years ago, called a temporary halt to his operations in southern Nicaragua last month. He blamed the CIA for drying up the secret funds that had sustained his two-month insurrection.

Because he wanted aid with no strings attached, Pastora alleges that the CIA turned down his request for funding. U.S. officials tried to pressure him into joining the CIA-backed guerrillas, but their ranks included too many of his old enemies from Somoza's national guard.

Pastora charges that the CIA set out to sabotage his fund-raising efforts. He described two specific examples to my associate Jon Lee Anderson, whom I sent to report on Pastora's independent guerrilla campaign.

One incident involved Col. Manuel Noriega, an old buddy who now heads Panama's national guard and who, like Pastora, was a protege of the late Panamanian strong man, Omar Torrijos. Pastora sought out Noriega in Panama last year and asked for his help.

"Noriega promised me help," Pastora said. "He promised me dollars and guns." But when Pastora returned two months later he found Noriega's door closed to him.

"After six months of trying, I had given up," Pastora recalled. "Then one day I met him by accident. I said, 'Friend, what's happened?' And he said, 'The CIA told me not to get involved, because they were giving you all the help you needed.' "

A second, similar incident occurred in Colombia, where Pastora has contacts in financial circles. There he said he was given $50,000—"petty cash," he called it—and was told to return in two weeks for a lot more.

But when he came back, Pastora said, "They told me the same thing Noriega had, that the CIA had spoken to them and had told them to lay off, that they were taking care of me."

Last month, the CIA's perfidy became clear when Pastora, in an eloquent speech to his troops, told them he had to call a temporary cease-fire because his organization was broke. He told my associate there was less than $400 in the till.

The result of his dramatic announcement was electrifying. Within hours after the cease-fire made headlines around the world, Pastora aides said, they were deluged with offers of money. The offers came from all over, including a Cuban revolutionary group in Miami. Some asked only for the number of a bank account to which they could send a check.

It's possible that Pastora's flamboyant move may bring in more than the $10 million he had once hoped to get from the CIA—and without strings.

Pastora makes no bones about his willingness to accept help wherever he can find it: from Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi, who once offered him $5 million to foment revolution in Guatemala; from Israel; from Argentina, "from the devil himself," Pastora said, as long as there are no strings attached.

He admitted after some prodding that one gift of 500 brand-new machine guns through a go-between in Colombia probably came from the detested CIA. The go-between "told me the only condition placed in return for the guns was that I didn't ask who was giving them," Pastora said, adding: "Who but the CIA can just give you 500 brand-new machine guns and at the same time tell you to keep your mouth shut?"

Other weapons were obtained on the black market in Europe and Latin America—and on one occasion in Los Angeles.

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