



The Sandinista Military Build-up



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Introduction

In July 1984 the Departments of State and Defense released a study entitled *Background Paper: Nicaragua's Military Build-up and Support for Central American Subversion*. That study described the growth of the Sandinista military and documented the extent and sophistication of Sandinista export of subversion and support for Marxist-Leninist guerrillas elsewhere in Central America, especially in El Salvador.

Since the publication of that study, the Sandinista arms build-up has accelerated. Between mid-1984 and early 1985, the active-duty force grew nearly 30 percent, from 48,000 to more than 62,000, and the tank and armored personnel carrier inventory increased from 240 to more than 340. Moreover, the addition of a radar air defense system and the Mi-24/HIND D, one of the world's most sophisticated attack helicopters, has further increased the military capability of the Sandinistas. This study describes this build-up and supplements the information on Nicaragua published in *The Soviet-Cuban Connection in Central America and the Caribbean*, released in March 1985.



The Sandinista Military: 1979–1985

Guerrilla Origins

In July 1979, a broad and popular coalition led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (*Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional*—FSLN) overthrew the government of Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza. Opposition to the Somoza dictatorship had become widespread during the mid-1970s, and the assassination in January 1978 of Somoza's leading critic, *La Prensa* editor Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, triggered demonstrations of popular outrage, including a lengthy general strike. The Sandinistas capitalized on this mounting resentment of Somoza, and Eden Pastora's (*Comandante Cero*) seizure of the National Palace that August captured the imagination of the Nicaraguan people. The ranks of the FSLN swelled; by late 1978, it had nearly 1,000 combatants,¹ and by the following summer, this figure had risen to about 5,000.² While numerically smaller than Somoza's 14,000-strong National Guard, at that time the Sandinistas had the support of the Nicaraguan people and received large amounts of materiel from abroad. In contrast, the National Guard was isolated from the people and faced increasing difficulties in obtaining supplies. In June 1979, the Organization of American States took the unprecedented step of calling for the "definitive replacement" of the Somoza regime.³ With no hope of external support and having lost control of much of the nation's territory, Somoza fled Nicaragua on July 17. The National Guard disintegrated literally overnight; many Guardsmen, including most of the higher ranking officers, fled into exile, while thousands of others, mostly enlisted men, were imprisoned by the new government.⁴

When the Sandinistas marched triumphantly into Managua on July 19, 1979, there was great hope for Nicaragua's future. The leaders of the FSLN had publicly pledged themselves to the principles of political pluralism, a mixed economy, and a nonaligned foreign policy. Although dominated by the Sandinistas, the new Government of National Reconstruction (GRN) included many others who had participated in the anti-Somoza

revolution.⁵ The GRN also enjoyed broad international support, and the United States took the lead in the assistance effort, authorizing \$118 million of economic aid and humanitarian assistance during the following 18 months.

The Build-up Begins

Once in power, the Sandinistas quickly set about building their armed forces and transforming their rag-tag guerrilla army into a well-equipped professional military. The *comandantes* realized from the outset that they would need a large, politicized military to pursue their revolutionary objectives and to maintain themselves in power once the bloom of the revolution had worn off and their true political orientation was exposed.⁶ In the fall of 1979, they initiated a military build-up without precedent in Central America. In less than 6 years, the Sandinistas have developed a military establishment with firepower and mobility unmatched in the region. This expansion has been made possible only with massive assistance from Cuba and the Soviet Union. Indeed, only the militarization of Cuba itself in the 1960s is comparable to what has occurred in Nicaragua since 1979.

The Sandinistas' plans called for a steady increase in the number of men under arms, first through "voluntary" enlistment and later through mandatory conscription. By early 1985, they had amassed an active duty force of more than 62,000. The Sandinistas' total strength, including all regular, reserve, and militia units and security forces, now exceeds 119,000.

Ground Forces

The Sandinista Popular Army (*Ejercito Popular Sandinista*—EPS), the full-time, regular army of the FSLN, has grown to 30,000. The EPS has systematically moved

⁵The original junta included Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, the widow of slain *La Prensa* editor Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, and Alfonso Robelo. Both resigned in April 1980. Mrs. Chamorro has become a vocal critic of Sandinista policies, particularly censorship of *La Prensa*. Robelo has become a leader of the opposition Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE). The first Defense Minister of the new government, Bernadino Larios, was a National Guard colonel who had defected during the revolution. At the end of 1979, he was replaced by Humberto Ortega, a member of the FSLN National Directorate. Larios was subsequently imprisoned for alleged subversive activities. Even after his release from jail in March 1984, he was kept under virtual house arrest. In March 1985, he escaped to Costa Rica.

⁶The top leadership of the FSLN held a secret meeting September 21–23, 1979 (barely 2 months after coming to power), to set forth plans for consolidating the revolution. The report from this meeting, formally titled "Analysis of the Situation and Tasks of the Sandinista Peoples' Revolution" but commonly referred to as the "72-Hour Document," candidly revealed the Sandinistas' intentions to build a large politicized armed force despite their acknowledgement that "at present there is no clear indication than an armed counter-revolution by Somocista forces beyond our borders is going to take place and jeopardize our stability."

¹"Rebels Train to Overthrow Somoza," *Washington Post*, October 15, 1978, p. A1.

²"Nicaragua Junta Assumes Rule in Jubilant Managua," *Washington Post*, July 21, 1979, p. A1.

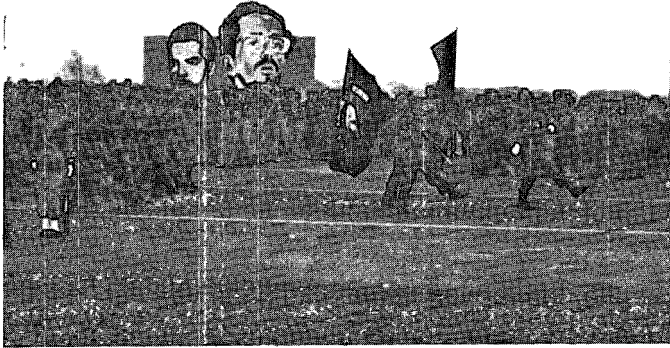
³The United States suspended military assistance to the Somoza regime in 1977. It participated in the OAS mediation effort in the fall of 1978 to resolve the growing crisis in Nicaragua, and in early 1979 the United States announced the suspension of other assistance programs to demonstrate its displeasure with Somoza's intransigence. The United States fully supported the June 1979 OAS resolution calling for Somoza's replacement.

⁴The Sandinistas held more than 7,000 political prisoners in 1979, most of them former National Guardsmen. See *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1979*, Department of State, February 1980.

also have emphasized the formation of reserve and militia forces; currently, these units total some 79,000 men, of which over 27,000 are on active duty at any one time. Dozens of new military bases have been constructed throughout Nicaragua, and the Sandinistas now have some 40 major garrisons and numerous smaller posts throughout the nation.

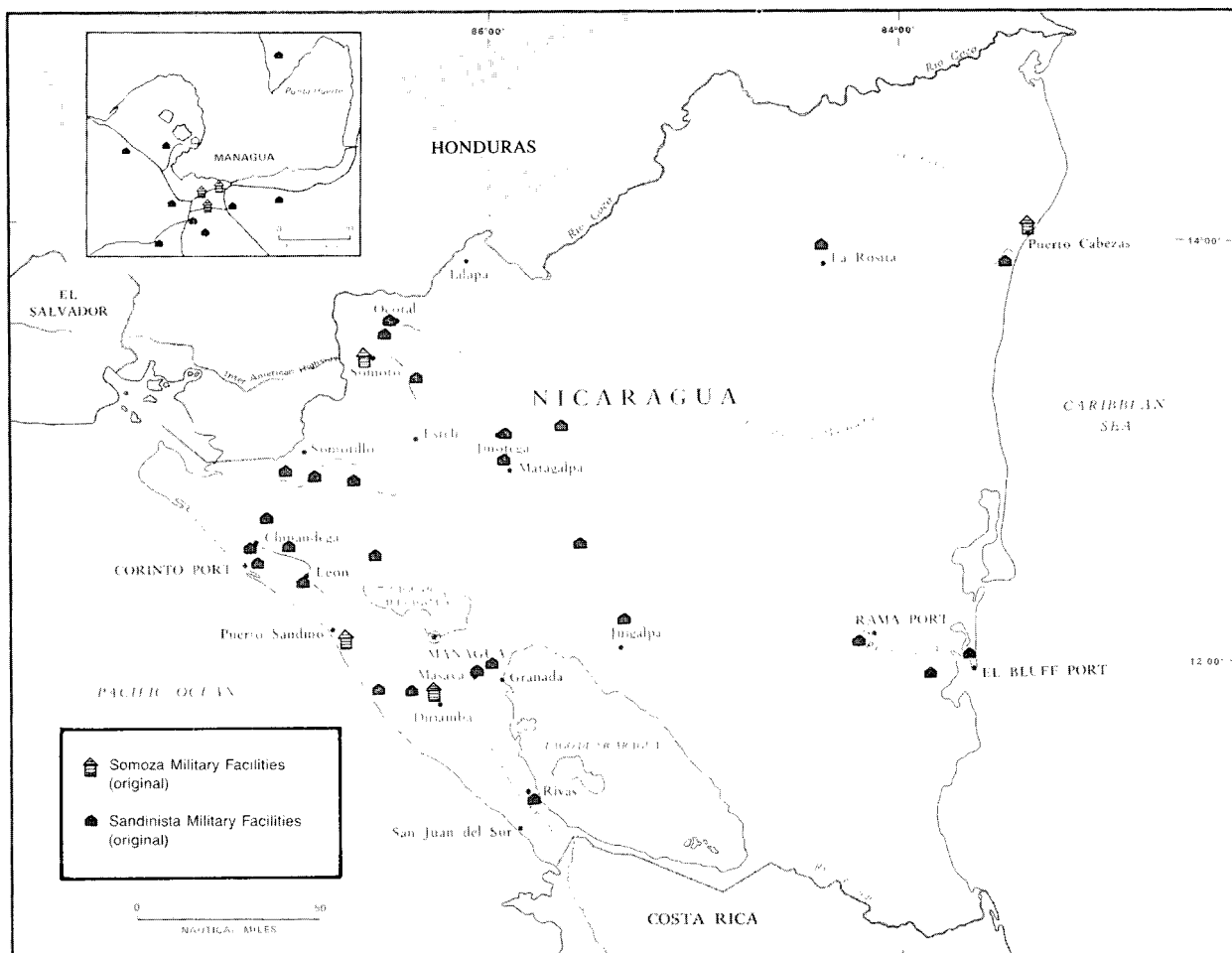
Infantry. The EPS has formed 10 regular infantry battalions. A special airborne battalion was inaugurated in 1982. The following year, special counterinsurgency battalions (*Batallon de Lucha Irregular—BLI*) were trained and equipped to engage anti-Sandinista forces. Units along Nicaragua's frontiers were organized as a special border guard force (*Tropas Guarda Fronteras—TGF*). The bulk of the Sandinistas' infantry forces consists of the roughly 160 reserve and militia battalions. These infantry units are equipped primarily with Soviet-bloc arms, such as the AK-47 assault rifle.

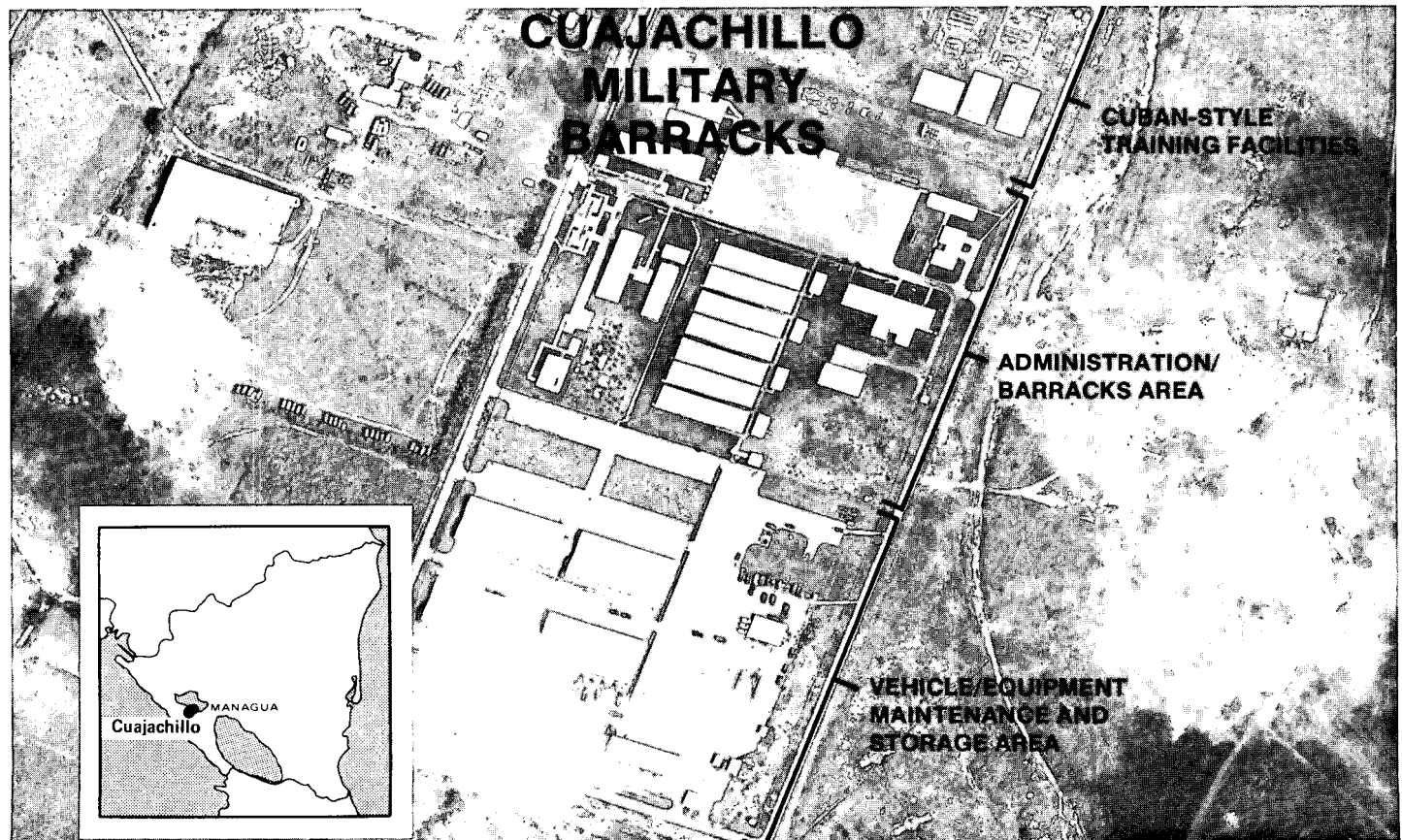
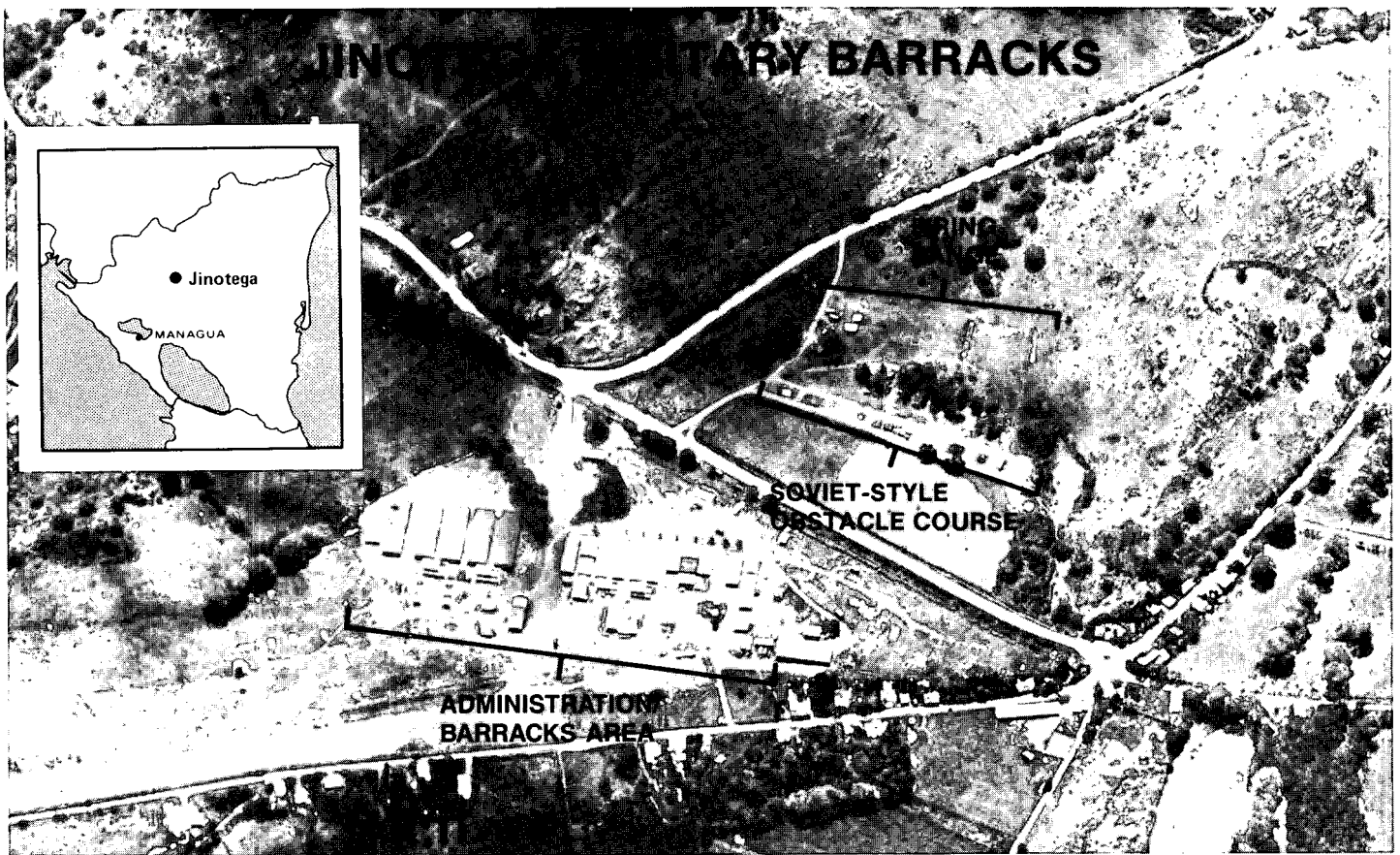
The Interior Ministry, which controls the Sandinista Police (*Policia Sandinista—PS*) and the General Directorate of State Security (*Direccion General de Seguridad del Estado—DGSE*), the Sandinista secret police, has direct command of its own brigade of 2,000 highly trained infantry troops (*Tropas Pablo Ubeda*).



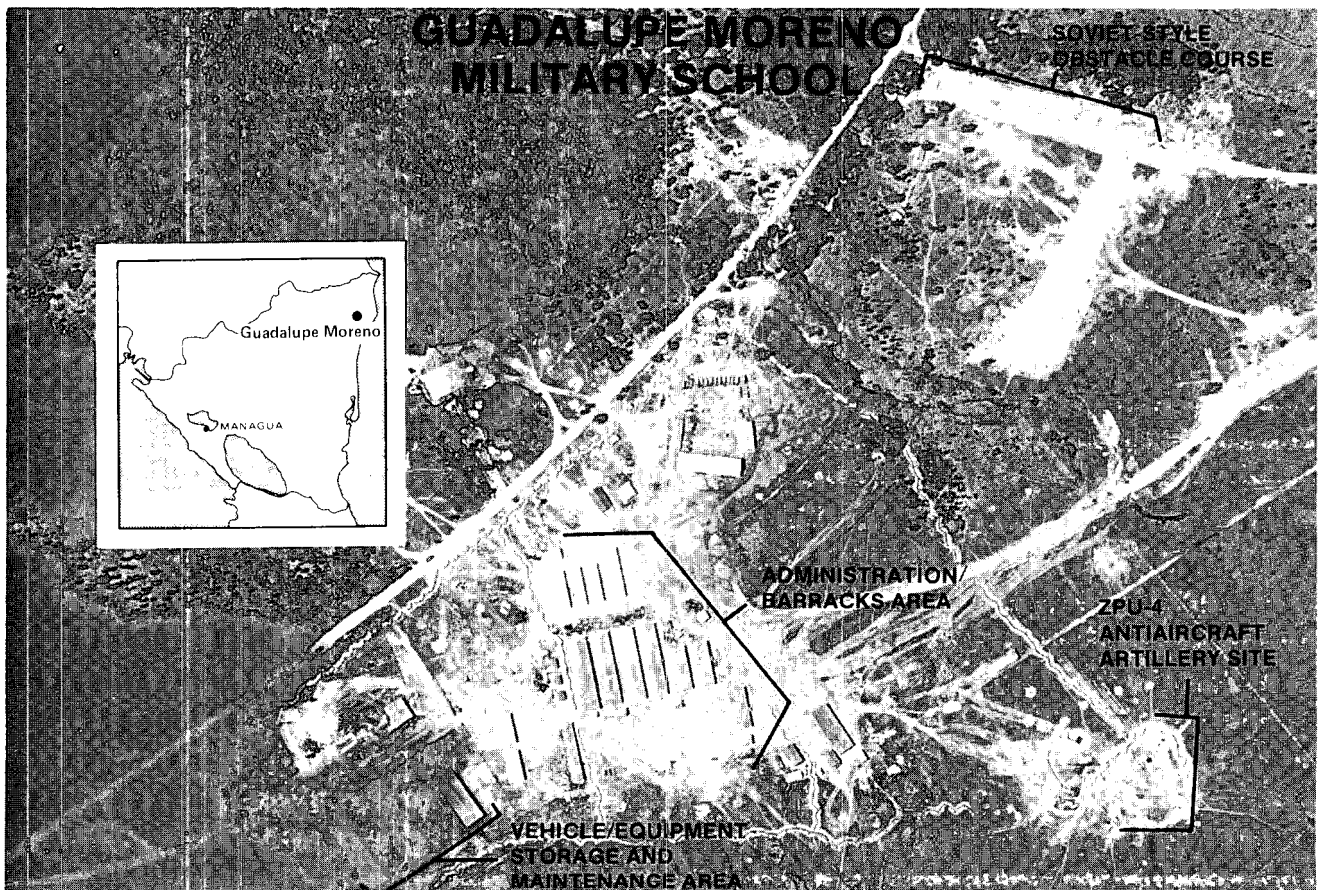
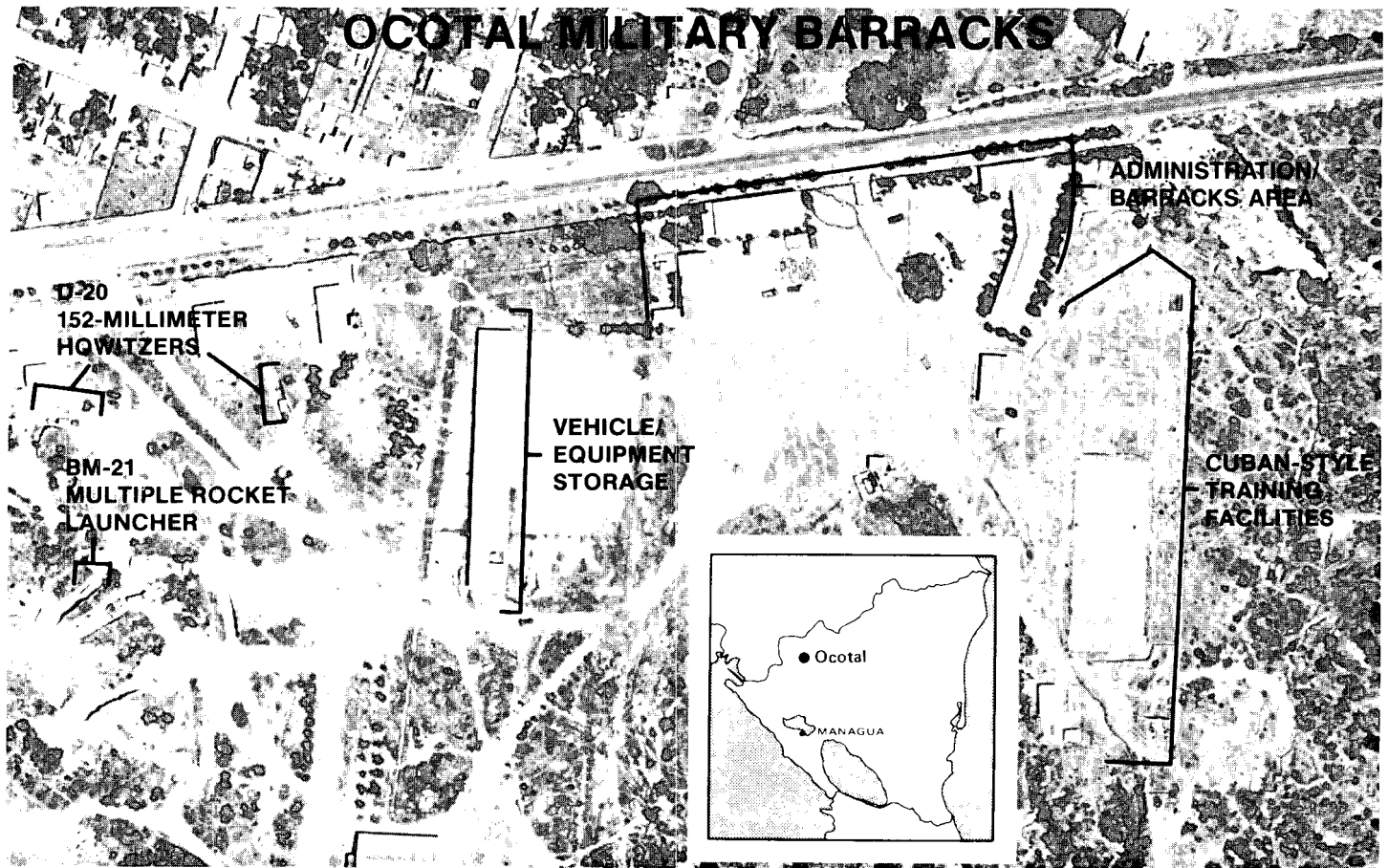
Sandinista troops passing in review. The militarization of Nicaraguan society has led to the building of armed forces nearly half the size of those of Mexico, a country with more than 25 times the population of Nicaragua. The Sandinistas now have an active duty force of 62,000 and total military/security forces of 119,000.

toward developing a combined arms capability, augmenting its conventional infantry forces with mechanized infantry, armored, and artillery brigades. The Sandinistas





The bases pictured here and on the following page are examples of the military garrisons the Sandinistas have built. Several have facilities of Soviet and Cuban design.



Armor. The Sandinista army has adhered closely to Soviet-Cuban military doctrine in the development of its armed forces.⁷ When the Sandinistas seized power in July 1979, they inherited the hodgepodge collection of armor that had belonged to Somoza's National Guard, including some obsolete World War II vintage tanks, only three of which were operational. The remainder of Somoza's armor consisted of 25 antiquated Staghound armored cars.

The Sandinistas set about building an armored force of a size and firepower without precedent in Central America. Crews and mechanics for tanks and other vehicles were sent to Cuba for training. Facilities to support the forthcoming arsenal were built. The first Soviet-built T-55 tanks arrived in mid-1981. The T-55, weighing 36 metric tons and armed with a 100-millimeter gun, can outgun any tank previously seen in Central America. Formerly the Soviets' main battle tank, it is still being used by Warsaw Pact armies. The Sandinistas used the T-55s to form a new armored battalion stationed near Managua.

Over the next 3 years, ships from the Soviet bloc continued to transport tanks to Nicaragua. By 1982, the Sandinistas had obtained a sufficient number of T-55s to organize another armored battalion. By the end of 1984, they had acquired a total of more than 110 T-55 tanks, enough to form five armored battalions of 22 tanks each.⁸

⁷Soviet military doctrine emphasizes the use of massed armor. In terms of size and organization, Sandinista armored units are modeled after their Cuban counterparts.

⁸In a February 1985 interview with CBS News, Sandinista Army Chief of Staff Joaquin Cuadra tacitly acknowledged that the EPS had 110 tanks and added that it planned to acquire up to a total of 150.

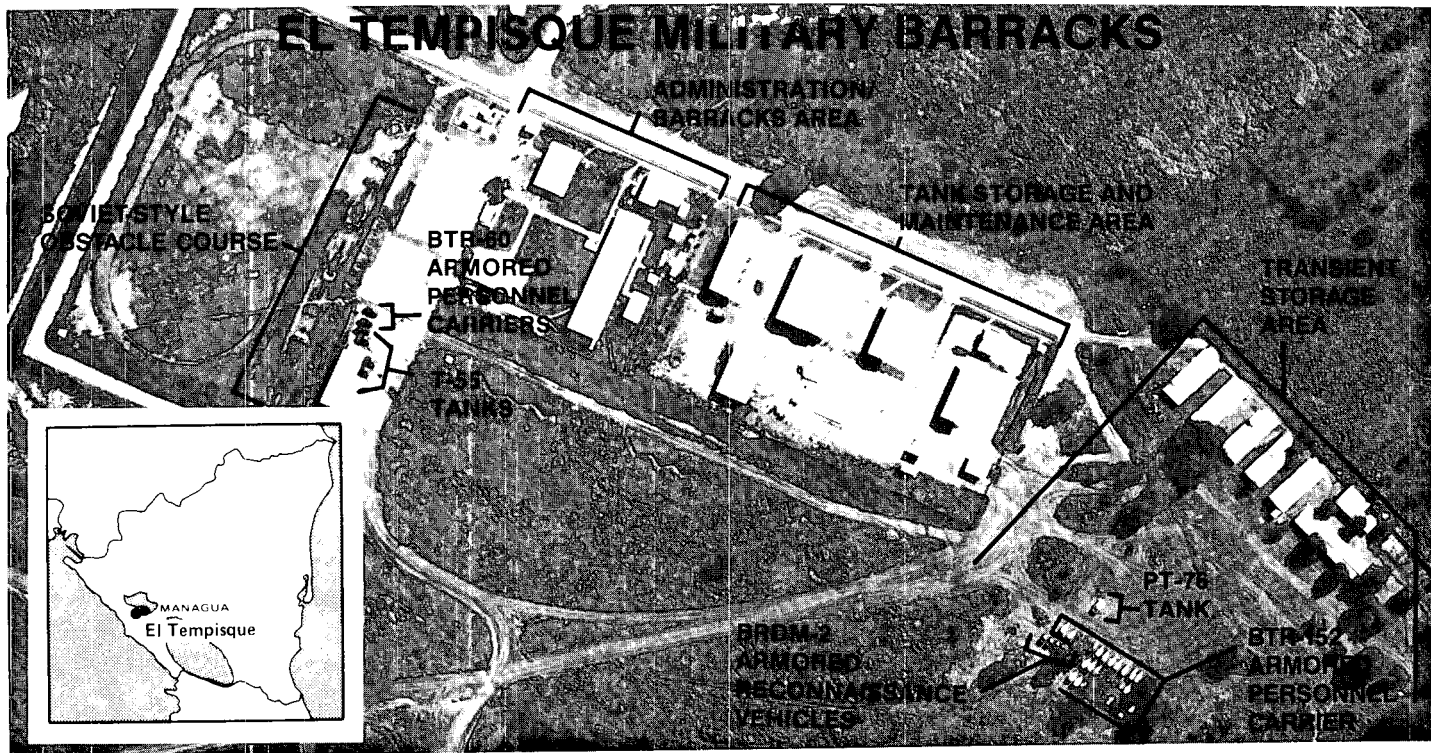
In 1984, the Soviets provided the Nicaraguans with about 30 PT-76 light tanks. This amphibious tank, armed with a 76-millimeter gun, fords rivers easily and can maneuver in some of the difficult terrain found in parts of Nicaragua.

The Soviets, through their allies, have also equipped the Sandinista army with more than 200 armored vehicles, mostly BTR-60 and BTR-152 armored personnel carriers. These vehicles are armed with a machinegun and can carry a squad of infantry. The first BTR-60s began arriving in mid-1981. The EPS has also received Soviet-made command vehicles and BRDM-2 amphibious armored reconnaissance vehicles. The Sandinistas have now formed at least one mechanized infantry brigade.

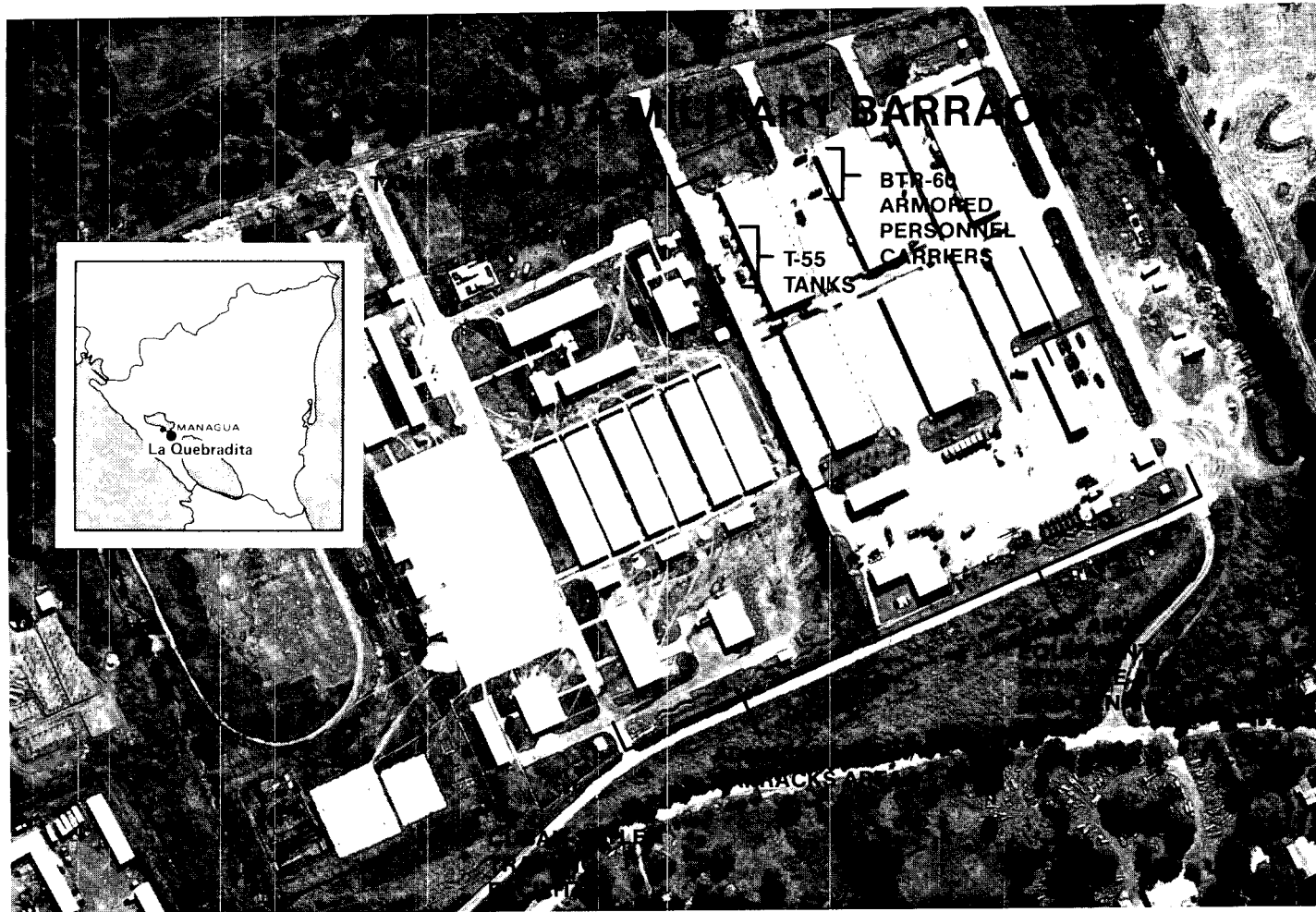
The terrain in certain parts of Nicaragua is well suited to armored operations, while in other parts of the country, the terrain imposes some constraints. Tanks can operate easily in the flat plains of the west, which encompass the principal population and economic centers of the nation. On the other hand, the mountains and rugged terrain of the northern departments limit off-road maneuverability. Nevertheless, the EPS has deployed armored units in the north, particularly in such missions as escorting convoys and guarding fixed installations. The lowlands of the Atlantic Coast region inhibit off-road use of the heavy T-55s, but the Sandinistas could deploy the amphibious PT-76s in this region. While some observers have argued that the terrain in Central America renders tanks of only marginal military value, the Sandinistas—and their Soviet suppliers—do not share this view; indeed, they have continued the rapid increase in the size of their tank force, doubling it in 1984 alone.



The Soviet-made T-55 tank weighs 36 metric tons and has a 100-millimeter gun. Formerly the Soviet Union's main battle tank, it is far superior to any other tank in Central America. The Sandinistas have more than 110 T-55s. In comparison, Somoza had three operational World War II vintage U.S. tanks.



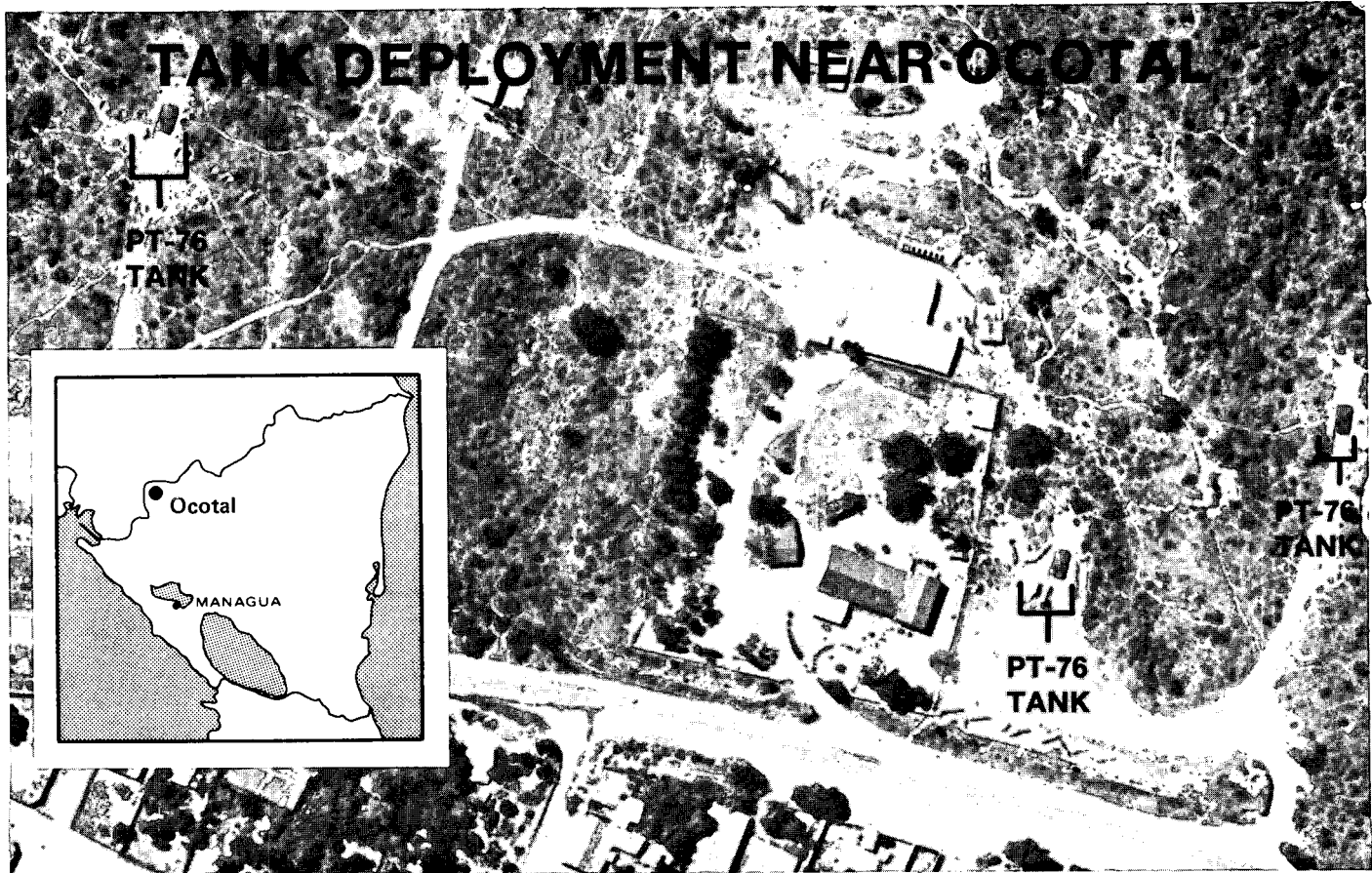
El Tempisque near Managua is the Sandinistas' principal transit storage base. The first T-55 tanks arrived there in mid-1981, long before the Sandinistas faced any serious armed opposition.



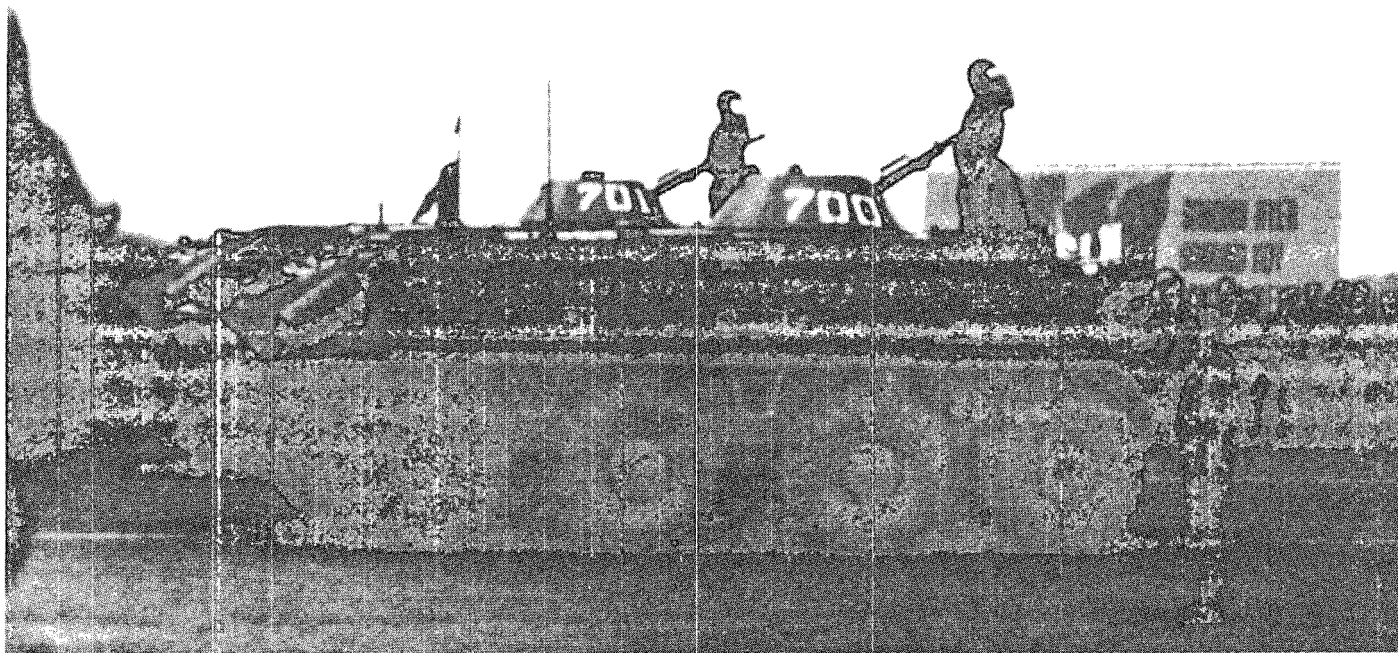
La Quebradita, in southern Managua, is another Sandinista base for T-55 tanks.



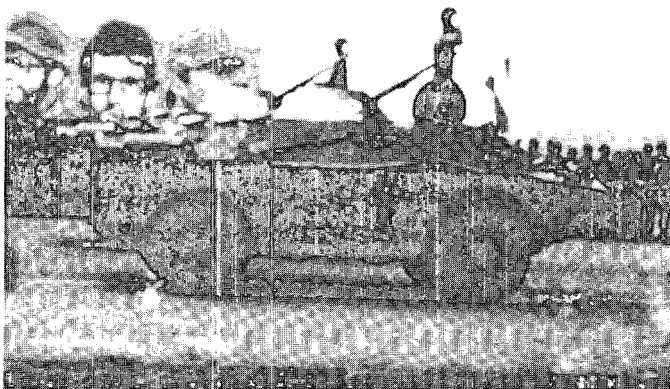
The PT-76 weighs 14 metric tons and has a 76-millimeter gun. This fully amphibious tank uses water jets for propulsion when in water. The Soviets provided the Sandinistas about 30 of these light tanks in 1984.



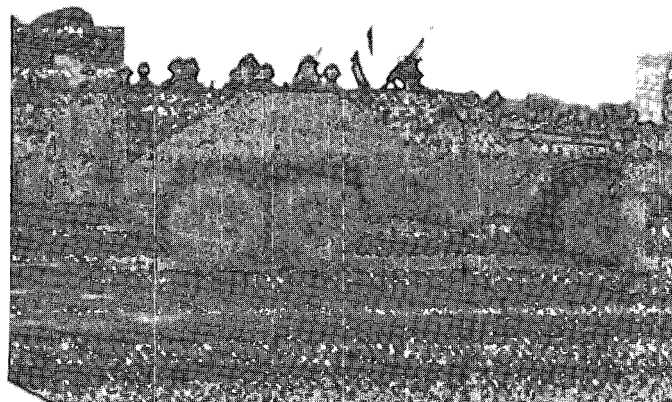
The Sandinistas can use some of their armor in the mountainous region of northern Nicaragua. These PT-76s are deployed in the town of Ocotal.



The BTR-60, an armored personnel carrier, can transport a squad of infantry. It is armed with a machinegun and is fully amphibious.



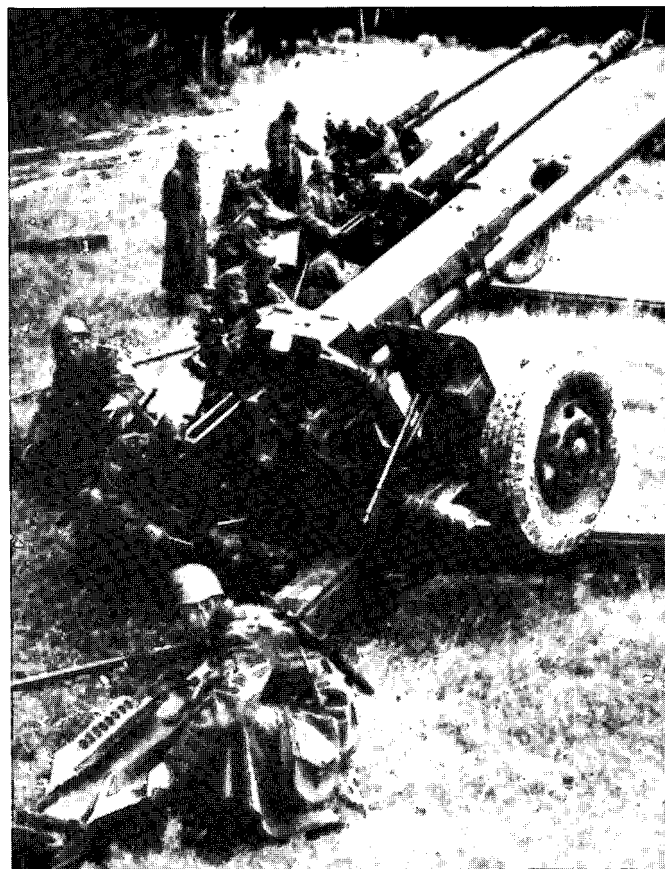
The BRDM-2 armored reconnaissance vehicle is fully amphibious and armed with a machinegun. The Sandinistas have dozens of these vehicles which, like the PT-76 light amphibious tanks and the BTR-60 armored personnel carriers, are well suited to the rough terrain in parts of Nicaragua.



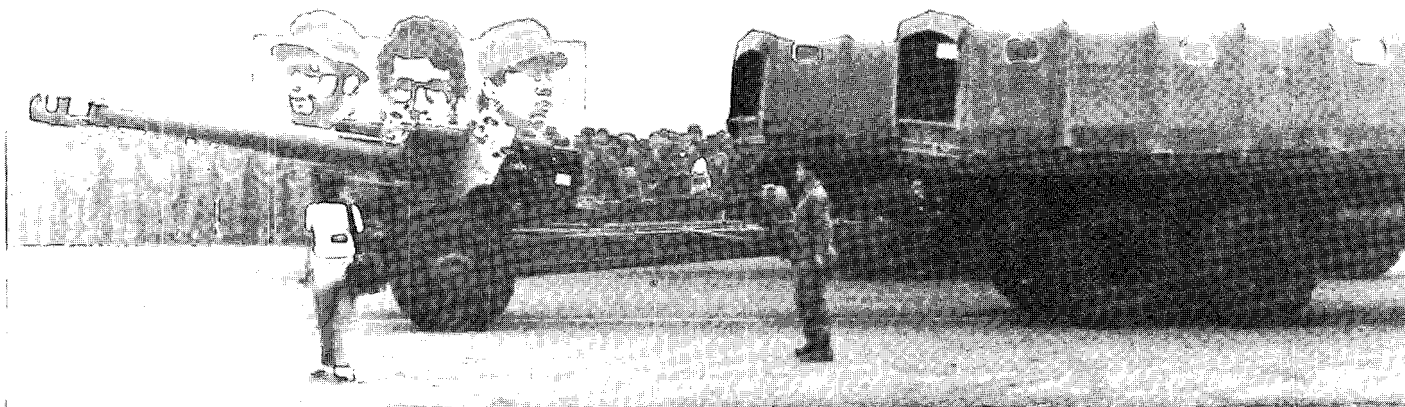
The BTR-152, an armored personnel carrier capable of transporting up to 17 infantry troops, is armed with a machinegun. Somoza had 25 antiquated armored cars; the Sandinistas now have about 200 armored vehicles, most of which are BTR-60s and BTR-152s.

Artillery. The growth of EPS's artillery force has been equally dramatic. During the revolution, the Sandinistas' fire-support weapons consisted of nothing larger than mortars. When they defeated Somoza's National Guard, they inherited three 105-millimeter howitzers.

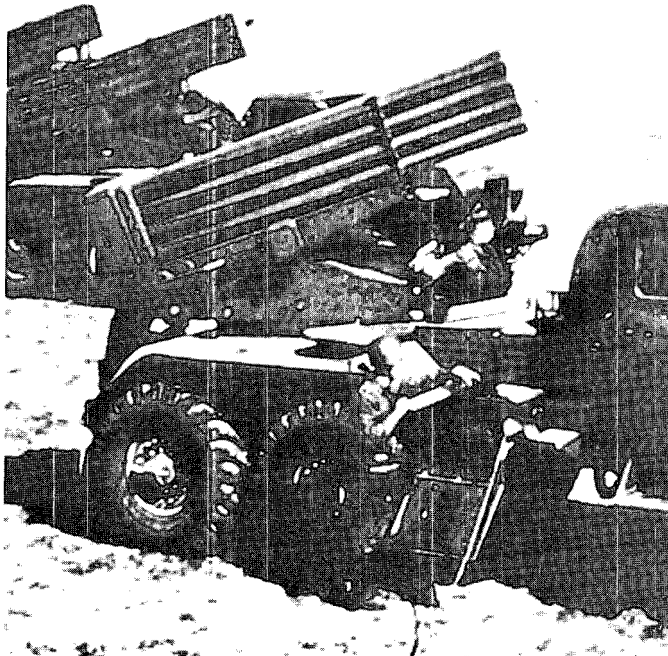
During their first year in power, the Sandinistas began receiving ZIS-2s, Soviet-made 57-millimeter antitank guns. By 1981, they were obtaining D-30s, Soviet-made 122-millimeter howitzers far surpassing in range and firepower all other artillery in Central America. That same year, they began acquiring D-20s, Soviet-made 152-millimeter howitzers, which represented a further qualitative increase in their artillery capability. In 1982, Soviet-made BM-21s, capable of launching a barrage of 40 122-millimeter rockets, arrived, greatly increasing the Sandinistas' area bombardment capability. In 1983, the Sandinistas formally inaugurated a special artillery brigade, based in Managua. Currently, the EPS's inventory includes 24 D-30s, 24 D-20s, 24 BM-21 multiple rocket launchers, and scores of antitank guns, as well as hundreds of mortars.



Somoza's artillery consisted of three 105-millimeter howitzers. As early as 1981, the Sandinistas began to acquire D-30 122-millimeter howitzers. The Soviet-made D-30 can fire a 48-pound shell nearly 10 miles. The Sandinistas have 24 D-30s.



The D-20 152-millimeter howitzer is the largest artillery piece in Central America. It can fire a 96-pound shell nearly 11 miles. The Sandinistas have 24 D-20s. These D-20s are being towed by Soviet-made KRAZ-255 trucks.

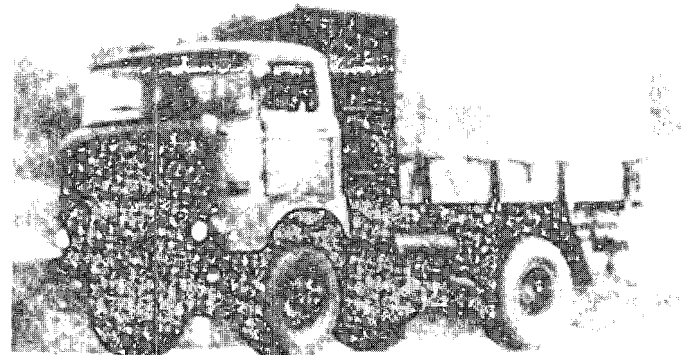


The BM-21 multiple rocket launcher is a modern version of the World War II "Stalin's Organ." It can fire a barrage of 40 122-millimeter rockets more than 12 miles. Each rocket carries a 42-pound warhead. The Sandinistas have 24 BM-21s.

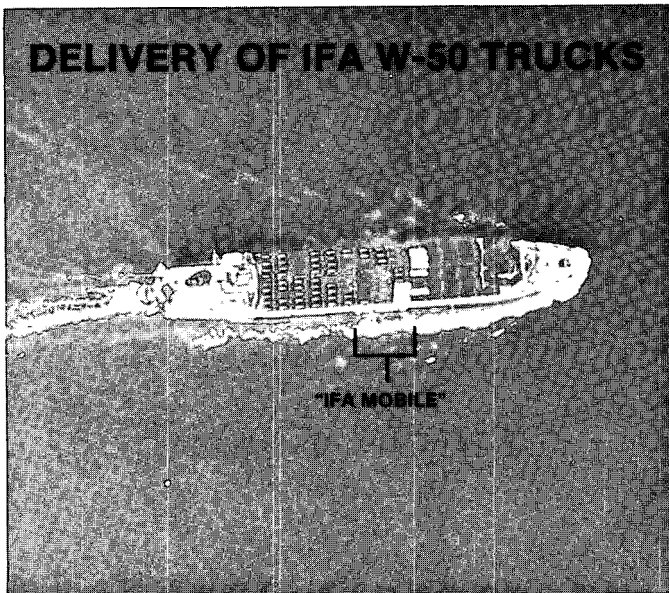


These Sandinista soldiers are firing a Soviet-made 120-millimeter mortar. This weapon can fire a 35-pound shell more than 3 miles.

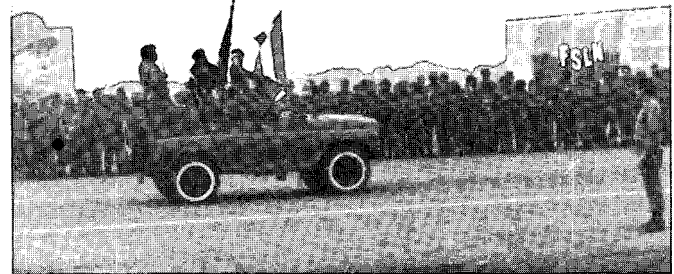
Support Units. The Sandinistas have begun to build an elaborate infrastructure to support their combat forces. They have created a special engineering battalion and communications units. The East Germans alone have provided the Sandinistas with more than 1,000 IFA W-50 trucks since 1980. Large numbers of other vehicles have been delivered by the Soviet Union and its allies. These include more than 800 jeeps, 40 flatbed trucks capable of transporting T-55 tanks, 6 tank ferries to shuttle the T-55s across rivers, numerous communications vans, and about 75 tanker trucks for fuel. The Soviets and Soviet-bloc states have also provided a multitude of other materiel ranging from mobile maintenance workshops and field kitchens to chemical warfare decontamination equipment. In 1982, they furnished the Sandinistas with the equipment to build a communications intercept facility at Santa Maria near Managua. Subsequently, additional intercept facilities have been built at Puerto Cabezas, San Francisco, and Santa Rosa.



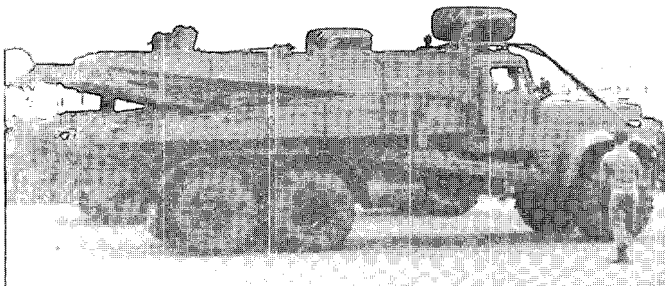
East Germany has provided the Sandinistas more than 1,000 IFA W-50 trucks. These trucks form the logistical backbone of the Sandinista army.



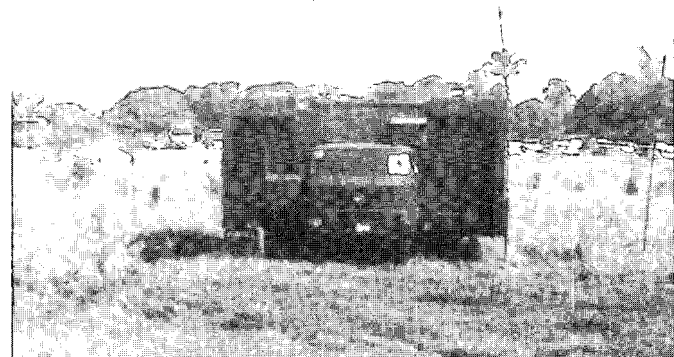
Roughly 130 IFA trucks were transported on a single East German-chartered ship in mid-1983.



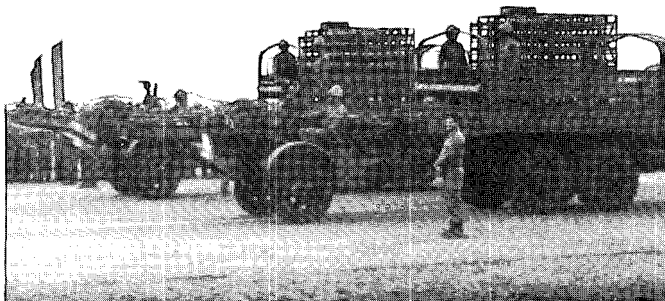
The Soviets have provided the Sandinistas more than 800 jeeps.



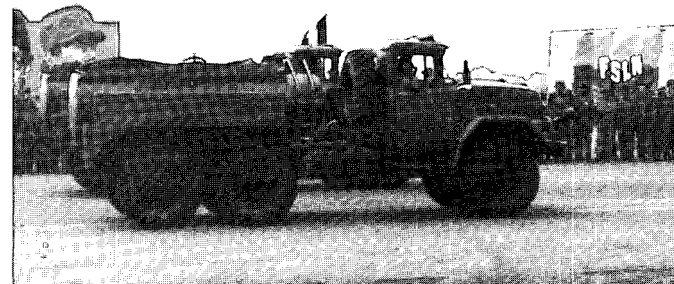
These TMM-3 scissor bridges can be used to cross smaller rivers. The acquisition of these bridges and the GSP amphibious ferries as well as large numbers of amphibious vehicles has given the Sandinista army unprecedented mobility.



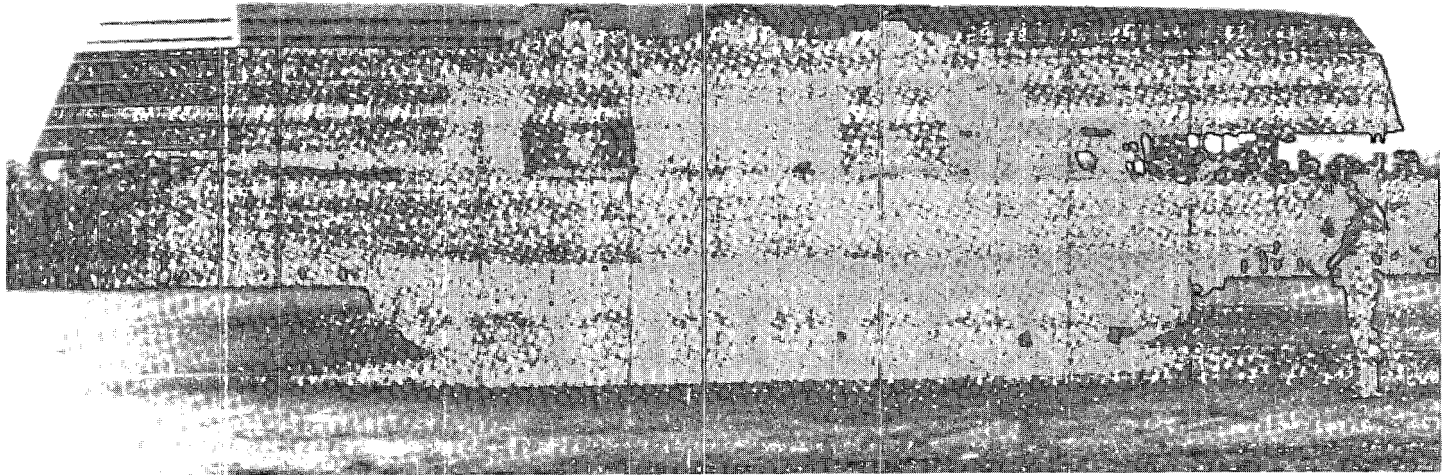
The Soviets have provided the Sandinistas with electronic gear, including communications vans such as this.



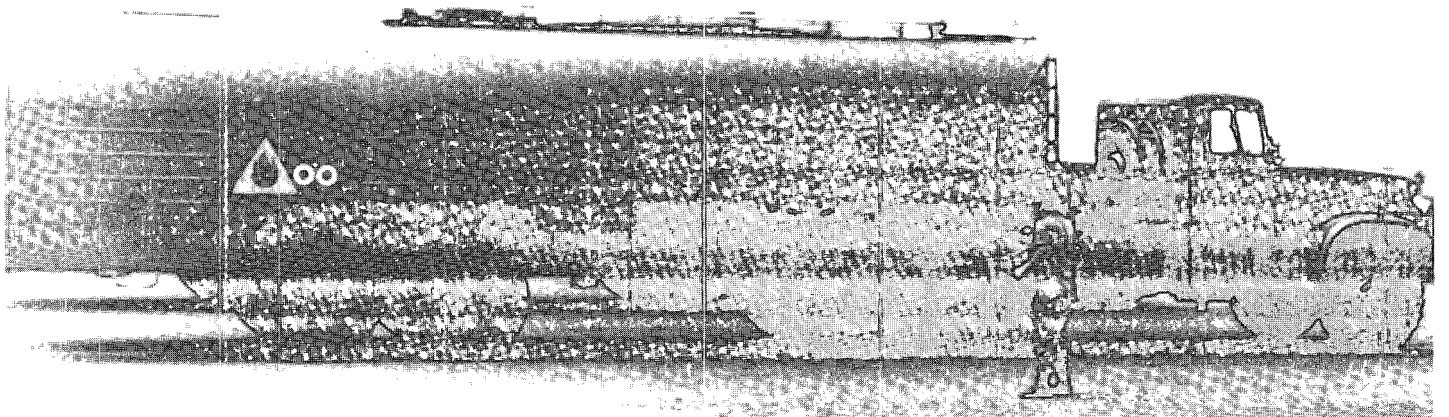
These Sandinista PMR-3 minelayers are towed by ZIL-131 trucks.



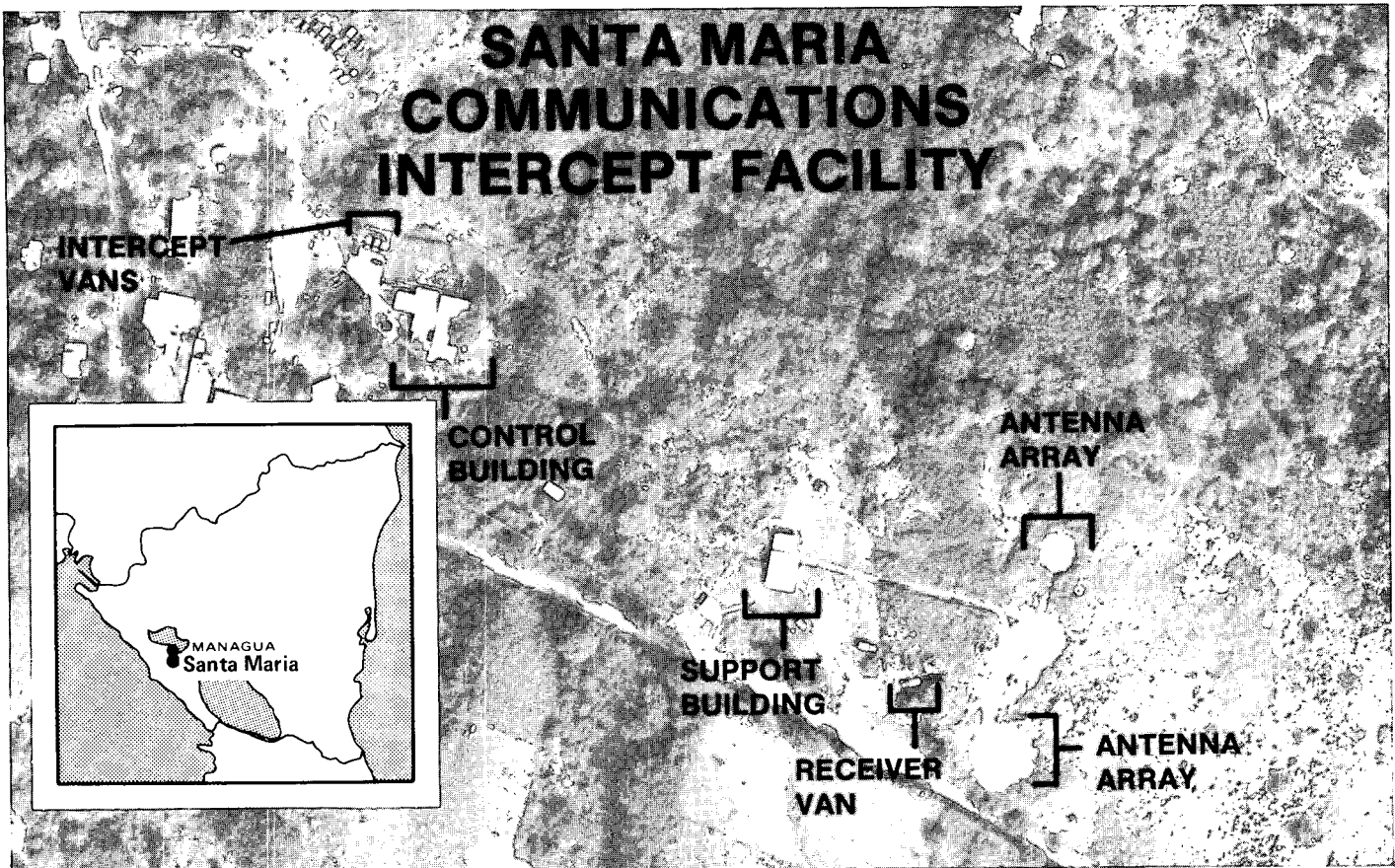
These ZIL-131 trucks, when equipped with decontamination tanks, can be used for chemical warfare.



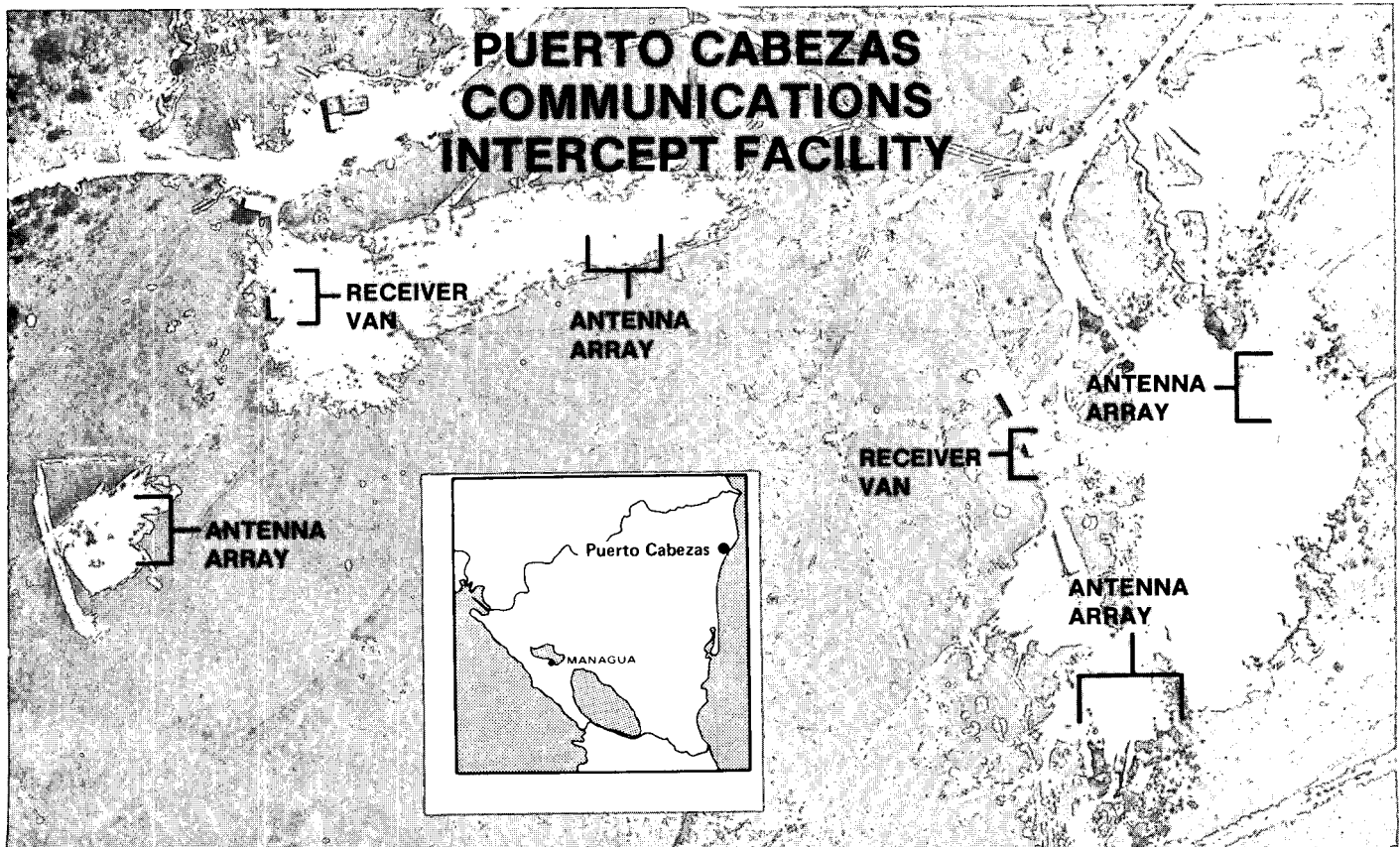
The Sandinistas have six GSP amphibious ferries which can carry heavy vehicles, including T-55 tanks, across rivers.



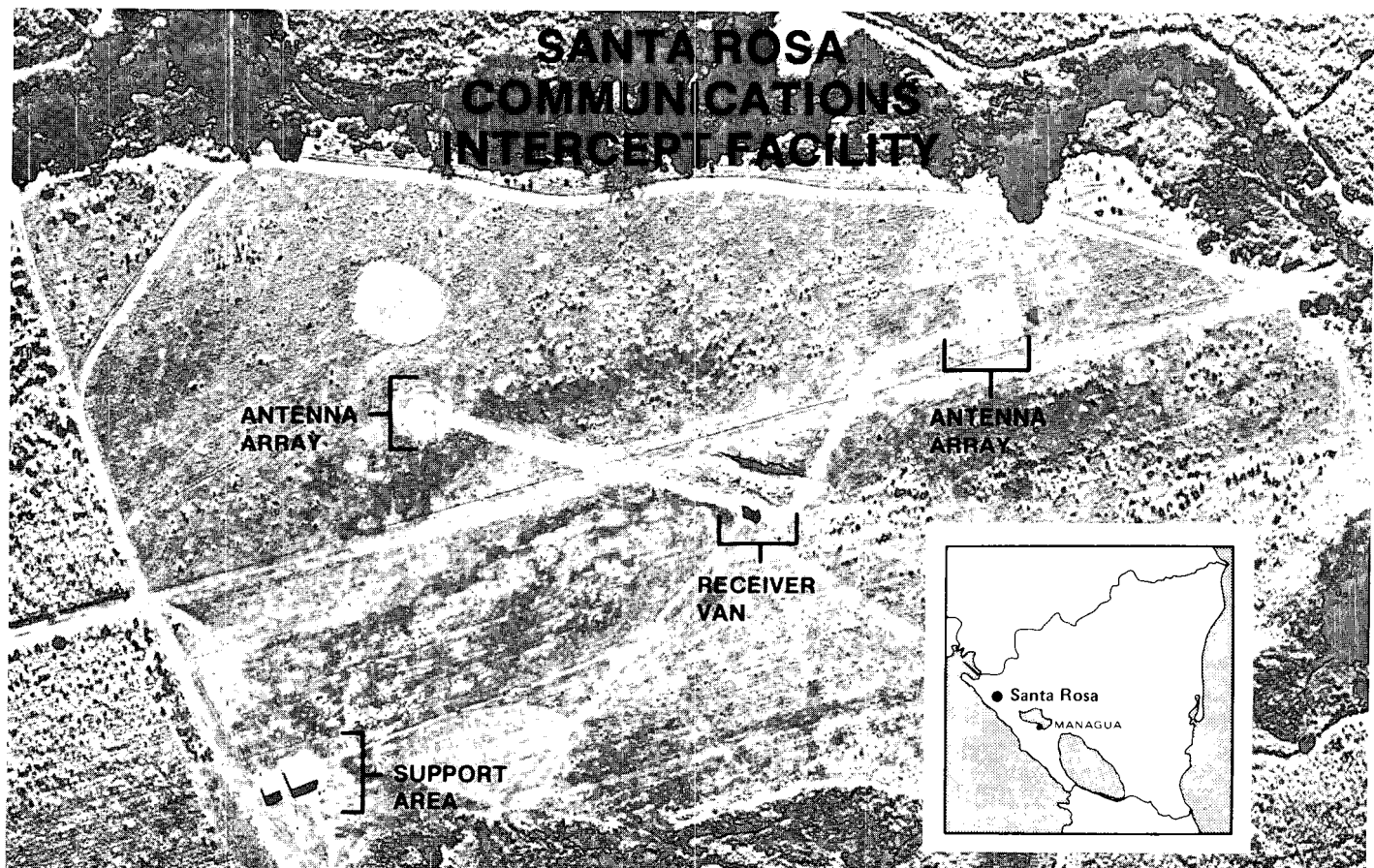
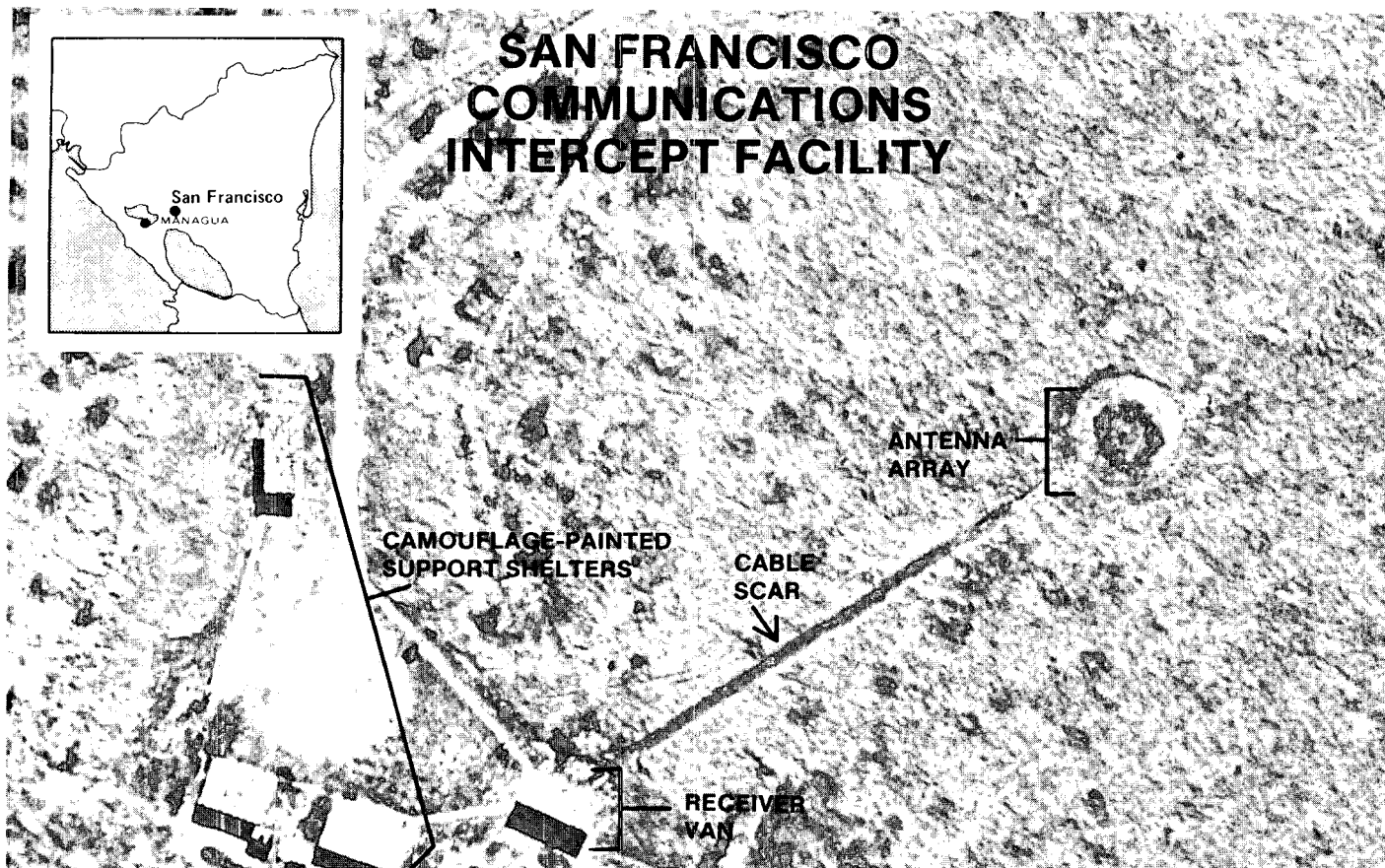
The Sandinistas have acquired about 75 fuel tanker trucks to provide logistical support for their growing army.

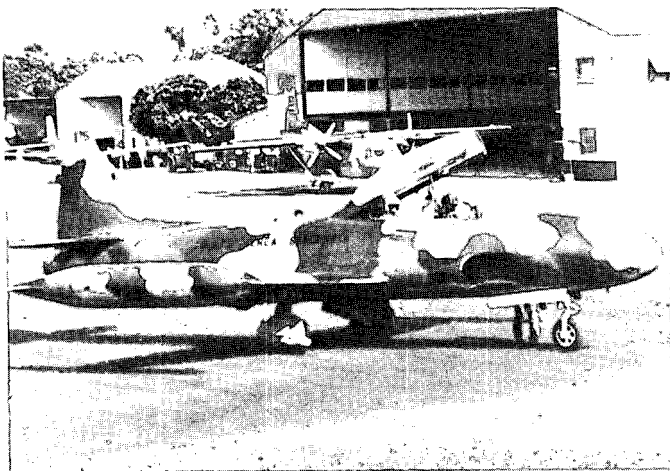


The Soviets provided the Sandinistas this communication intercept facility in 1982.

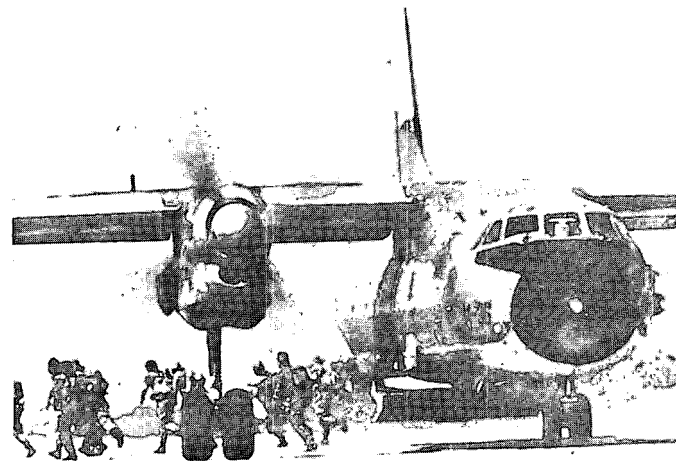


Three additional communications intercept facilities (above and on following page) have been built in the last 2 years.





The Sandinista air force began with the remnants of Somoza's air force, which included a few of these AT-33A jets. The Sandinistas placed a high priority on developing a more powerful air arm. They made plans to expand existing airfields and to build new ones, and, by 1980, were sending personnel to Soviet-bloc countries to be trained as pilots and mechanics.



This photo shows Cuban commandos deploying from a Soviet-built Cuban air force AN-26 transport plane during training exercises. In 1983, the Sandinistas acquired two of this type of aircraft, significantly increasing their air transport capabilities.



The Mi-8/HIP is one of the Soviets' principal combat helicopters. It can be armed with a machinegun, rocket pods, and antitank missiles. The Mi-8 also serves as a transport helicopter for Sandinista troops and their equipment. The Sandinistas have received more than a dozen Mi-8s.

Air Force and Air Defense

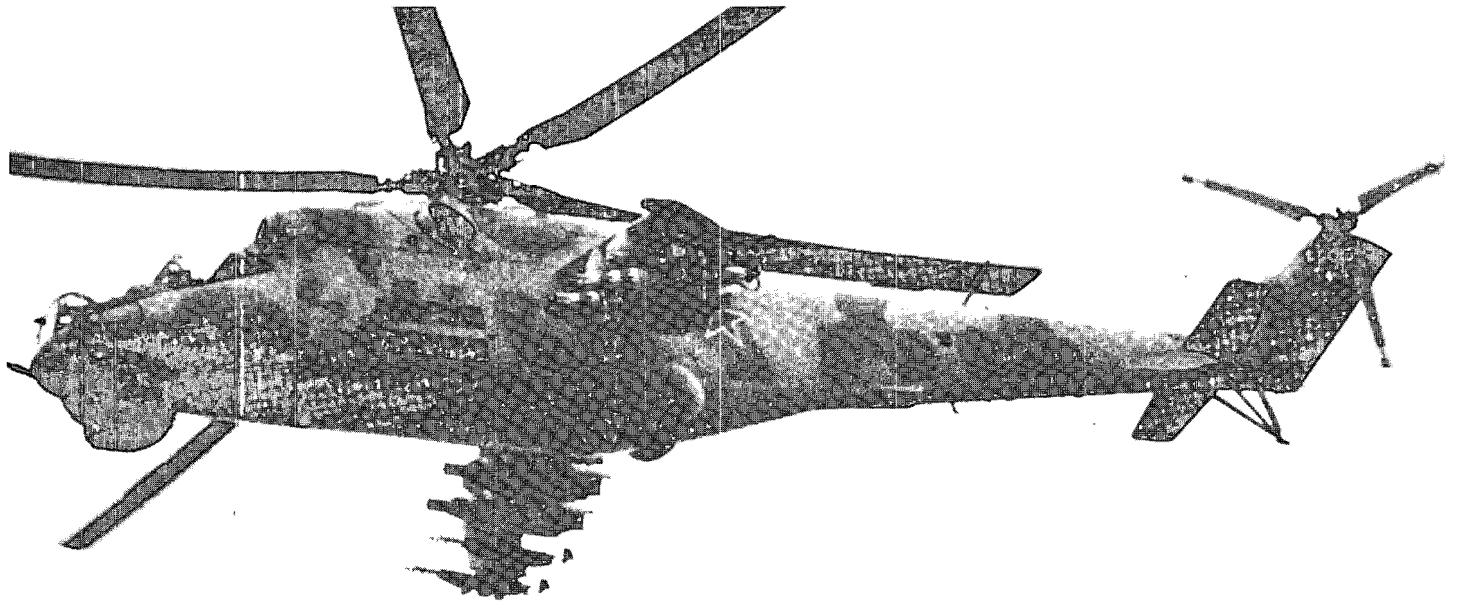
The 2,000-troop Sandinista Air Force and Air Defense Force (*Fuerza Aerea Sandinista/Defensa Anti-Aerea*—FAS/DAA) has been undergoing substantial improvements since 1979. The Sandinistas began with the remnants of the National Guard's small air force, which included a handful of AT-33A jets, Cessna 337 push-pull aircraft, transport aircraft, trainers, and helicopters. The Sandinistas placed a high priority on developing a more powerful air arm. Early on, they sent personnel to Cuba and Soviet-bloc countries to be trained as pilots and mechanics, and they made plans to expand existing airfields and to build new ones.

Because of the long lead time associated with the acquisition of aircraft—i.e., the need for lengthy pilot training and the construction of airfields—the FAS grew slowly in its early years. The first fixed-wing aircraft added to the inventory were older and unsophisticated models such as Soviet-made AN-2s. In 1982, they acquired four Italian-made SF-260 trainer/tactical support aircraft from Libya. Two Soviet-made AN-26 medium transports added in 1983 significantly improved the Sandinistas' logistics support capabilities.

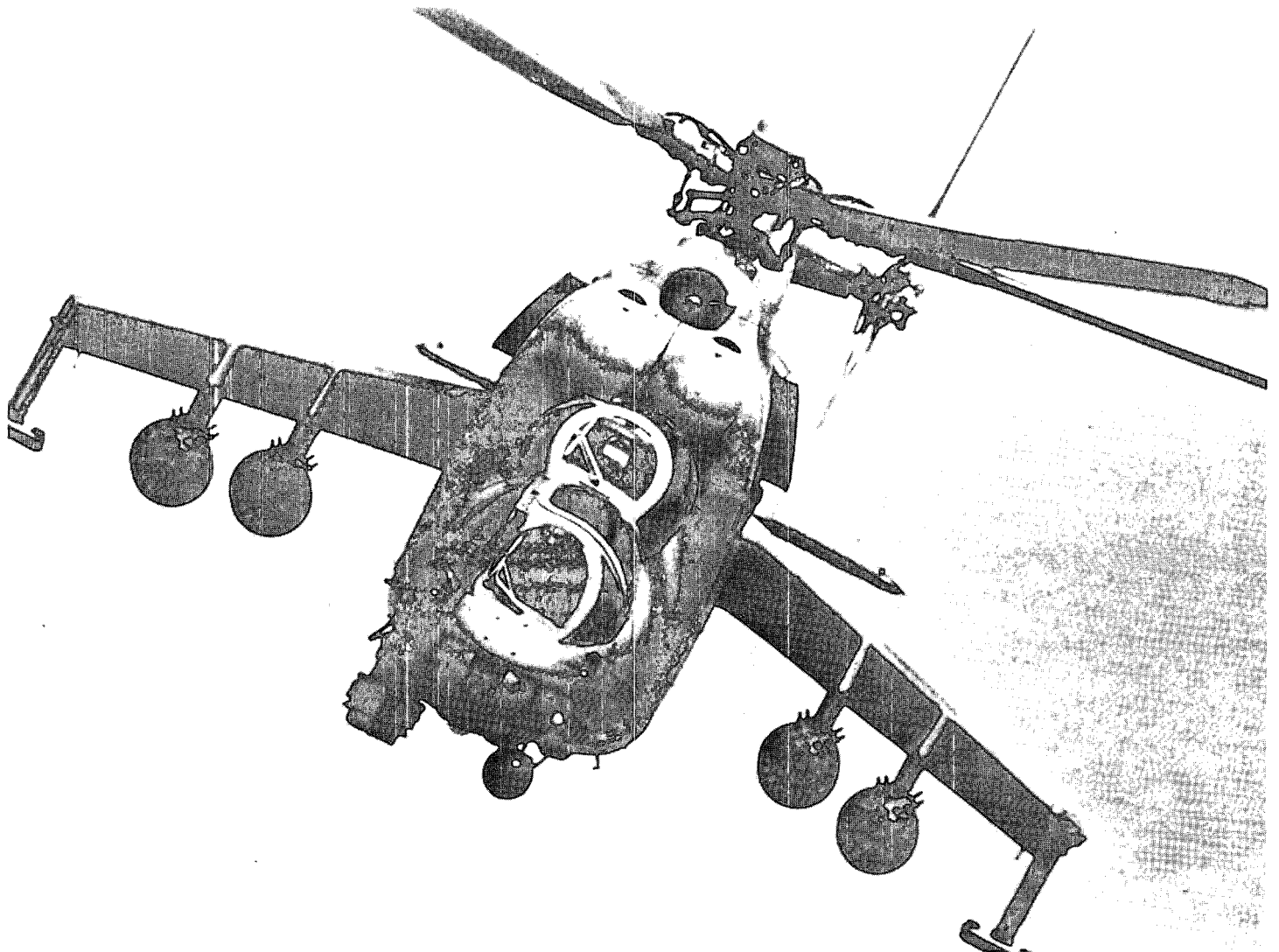
The Sandinistas' helicopter inventory has grown more rapidly. Some of these helicopters have been obtained from Western nations, such as two Alouettes received from France in 1982. The great majority of these craft have been obtained from the Soviets and their allies, however. In 1981, the first two Soviet Mi-8/HIP medium-lift helicopters arrived. The following April, the Soviets formally donated the Mi-8s to the Sandinistas, alleging that they were to be used to help develop the Atlantic Coast region of Nicaragua. In fact, the Mi-8 is one of the Soviet Union's front-line combat helicopters and can be armed with a machinegun and rocket pods. The Sandinistas have received more than a dozen Mi-8s and have used them extensively in military operations. In 1982, the Sandinistas also acquired Polish-built Mi-2/HOPLITE cargo helicopters.

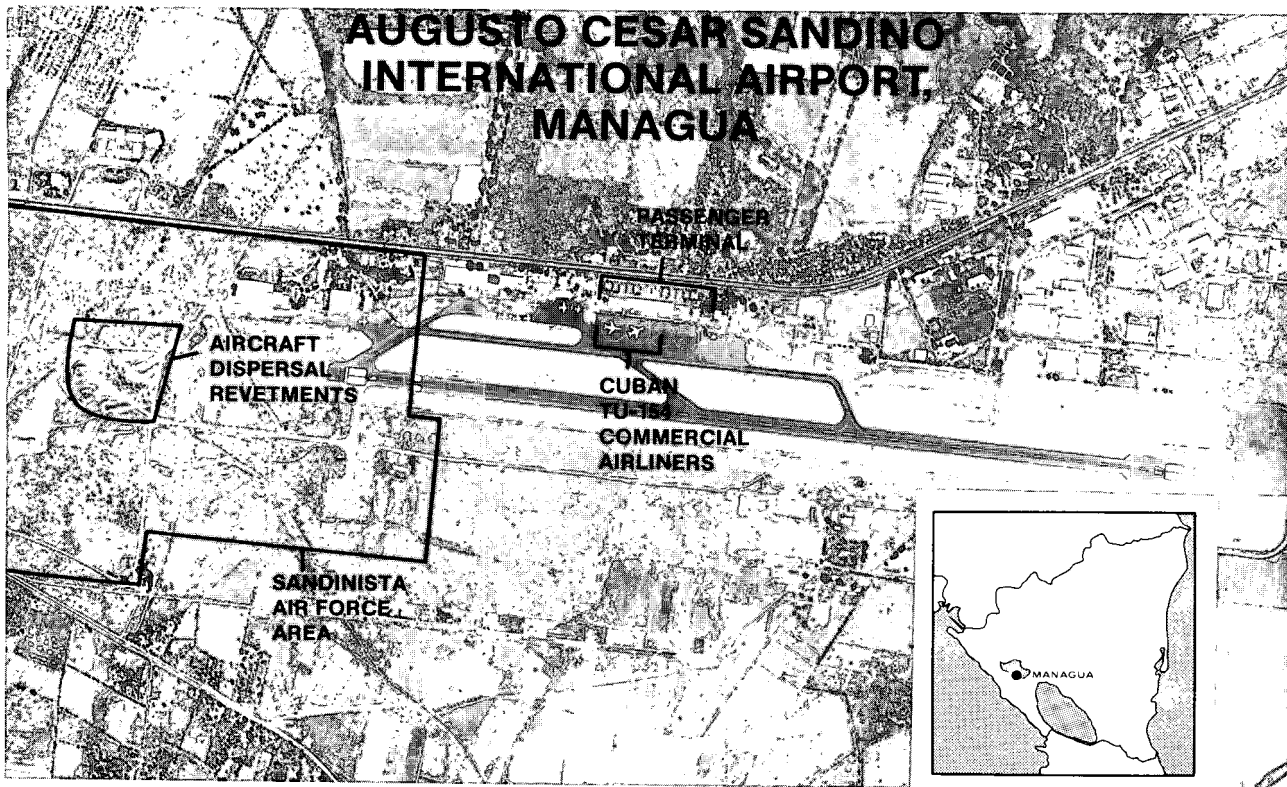
In late 1984, the Sandinistas received the first of a new generation of helicopter gunships, the Mi-24/HIND D. This is the Soviets' principal attack helicopter, and it has been used extensively by the Soviets in Afghanistan. One of the most highly sophisticated attack helicopters in the world, it holds the helicopter speed record and can be armed with a multiple-barrel machinegun, guided missiles, rocket pods, and bombs. The HIND's heavy armor, coupled with its high speed, greatly reduces its vulnerability to small arms fire.⁹ Acquisition of the HIND D adds a new dimension to warfare in Central America. Key targets in Honduras, Costa Rica, and El Salvador are all within the reach of this flying "tank." Some five to eight Mi-24s had been delivered to Nicaragua by early 1985.

⁹For further information on the Mi-24, see John F. Guilmartin, Jr.'s, "Nicaragua is Armed for Trouble," *Wall Street Journal*, March 11, 1985, p. 28.

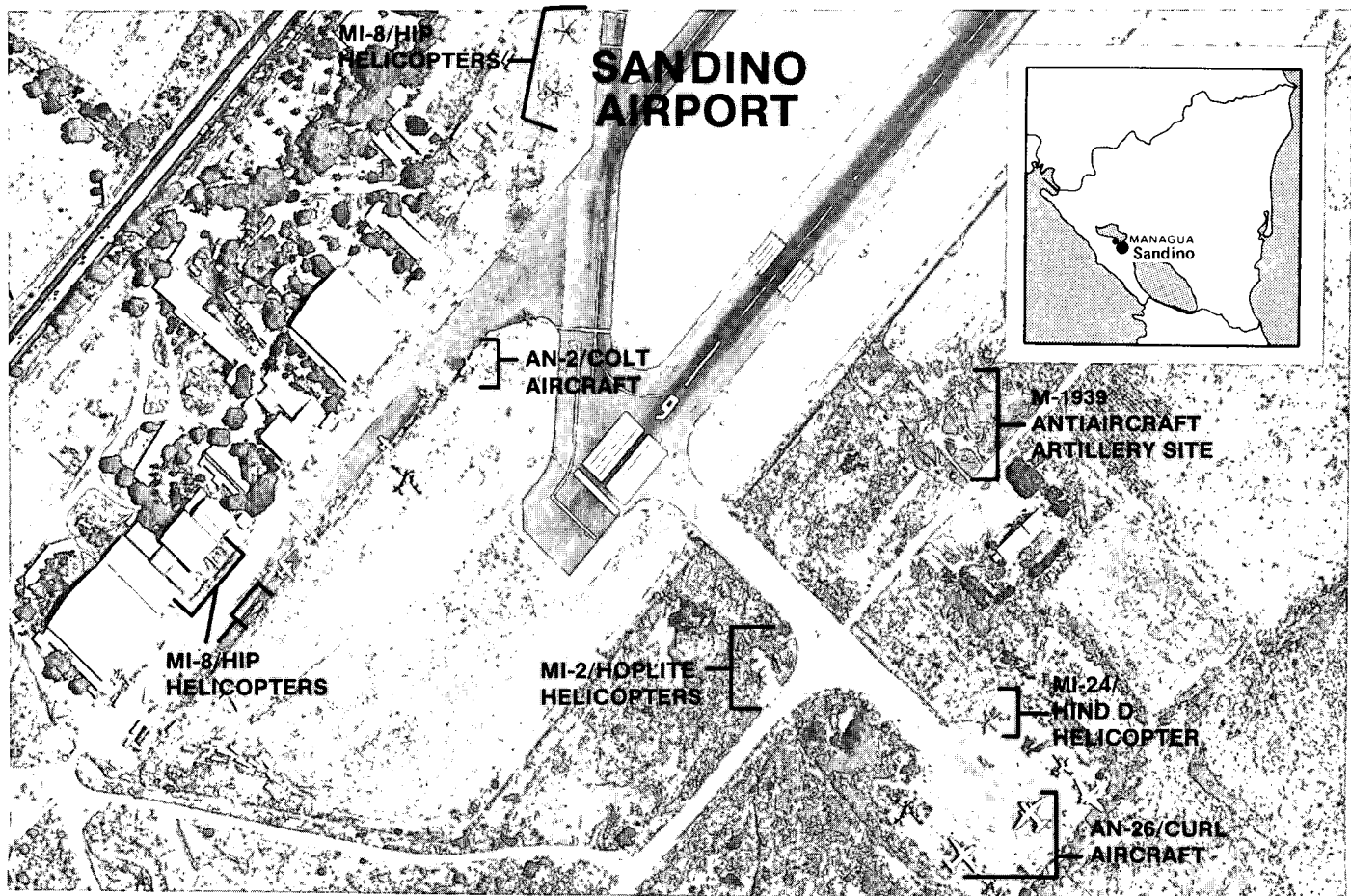


The Mi-24/HIND D (above and below) is one of the world's most advanced attack helicopters. It has a nose-mounted Gatling-type machinegun and can carry up to 4 pods containing nearly 130 57-millimeter rockets as well as antitank missiles or bombs. This is the same helicopter being used by the Soviet Union against Afghan rebels. The Sandinista air force now has five to eight of these flying "tanks."

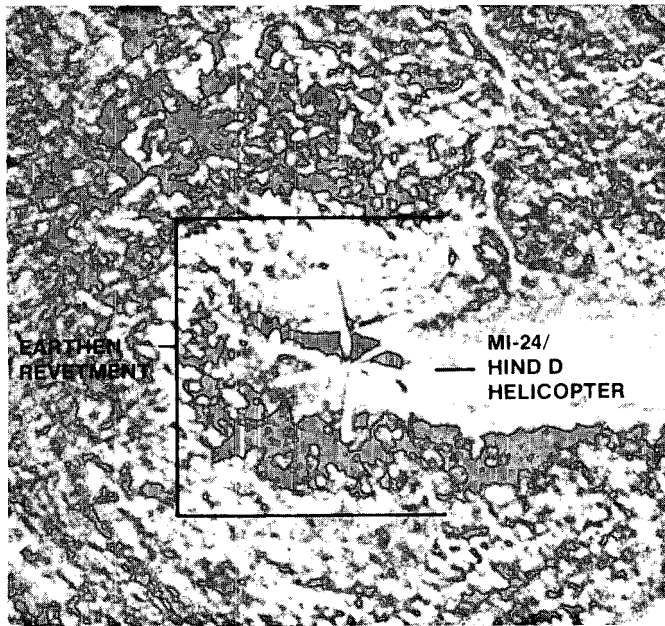




Augusto Cesar Sandino International Airport in Managua is the principal base for the Sandinista air force. The western portion of the airfield (left in photo) is the military area.

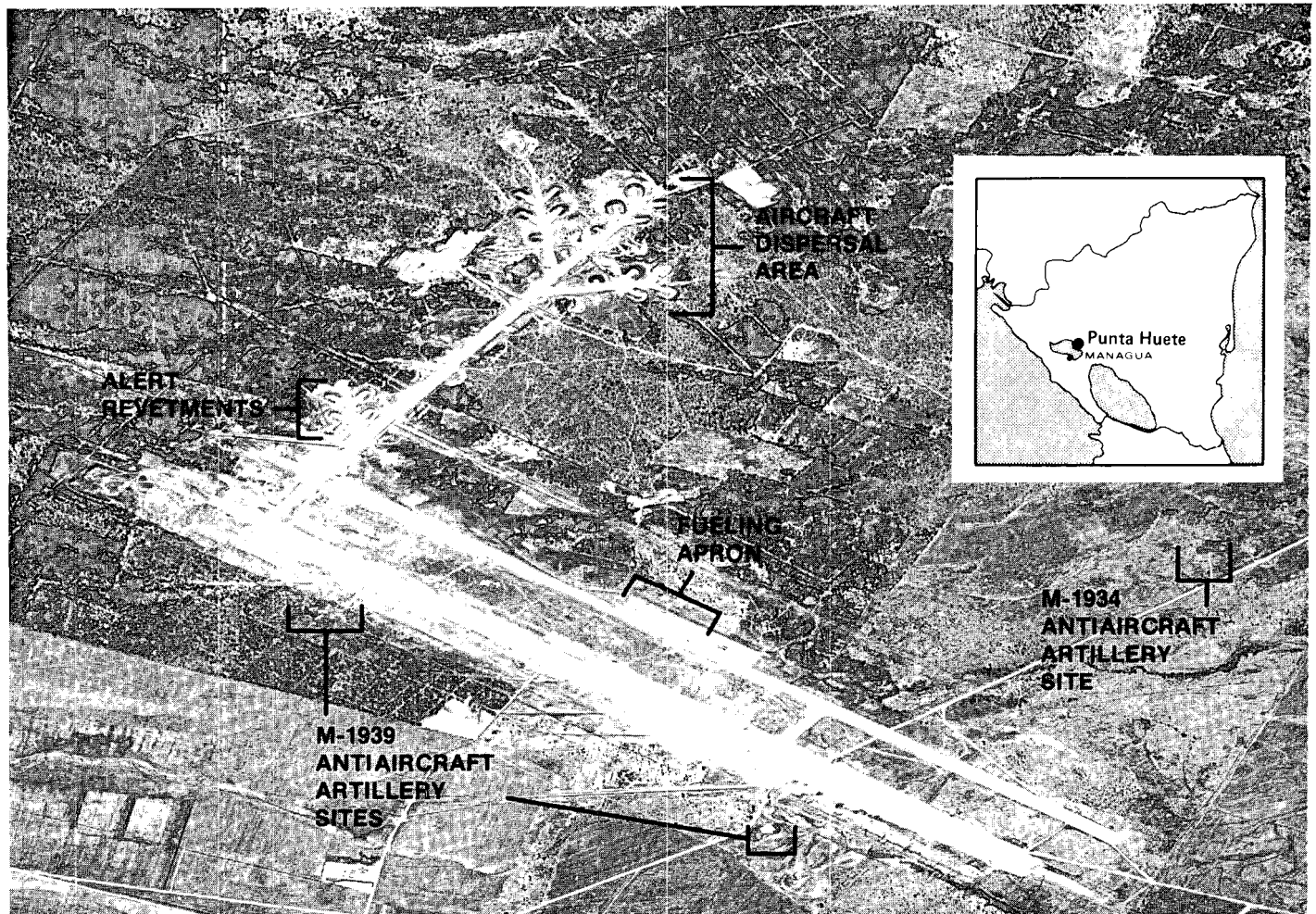


Examples of the many types of Soviet-bloc aircraft provided to the Sandinistas.



The Sandinistas have three AT-33A jets, and in 1984 top FSLN leaders repeatedly proclaimed their desire to acquire additional jet fighters. Nicaraguan pilots and mechanics reportedly have been undergoing training in Cuba and the Soviet bloc since the early 1980s. In 1982, with Cuban and Soviet assistance, the Sandinistas began constructing the Punta Huete airfield in an isolated area northeast of Managua. The principal runway at Punta Huete is 10,000 feet in length, making it the longest military runway in Central America. When completed, it will be able to accommodate any aircraft in the Soviet-bloc inventory. Sixteen revetments of the size and design appropriate for jet fighters already have been constructed. In addition to Punta Huete, the Sandinistas have been upgrading their principal airbase at Sandino Airport in Managua as well as other airfields at Montelimar, Puerto Cabezas, Esteli, La Rosita, and Bluefields.

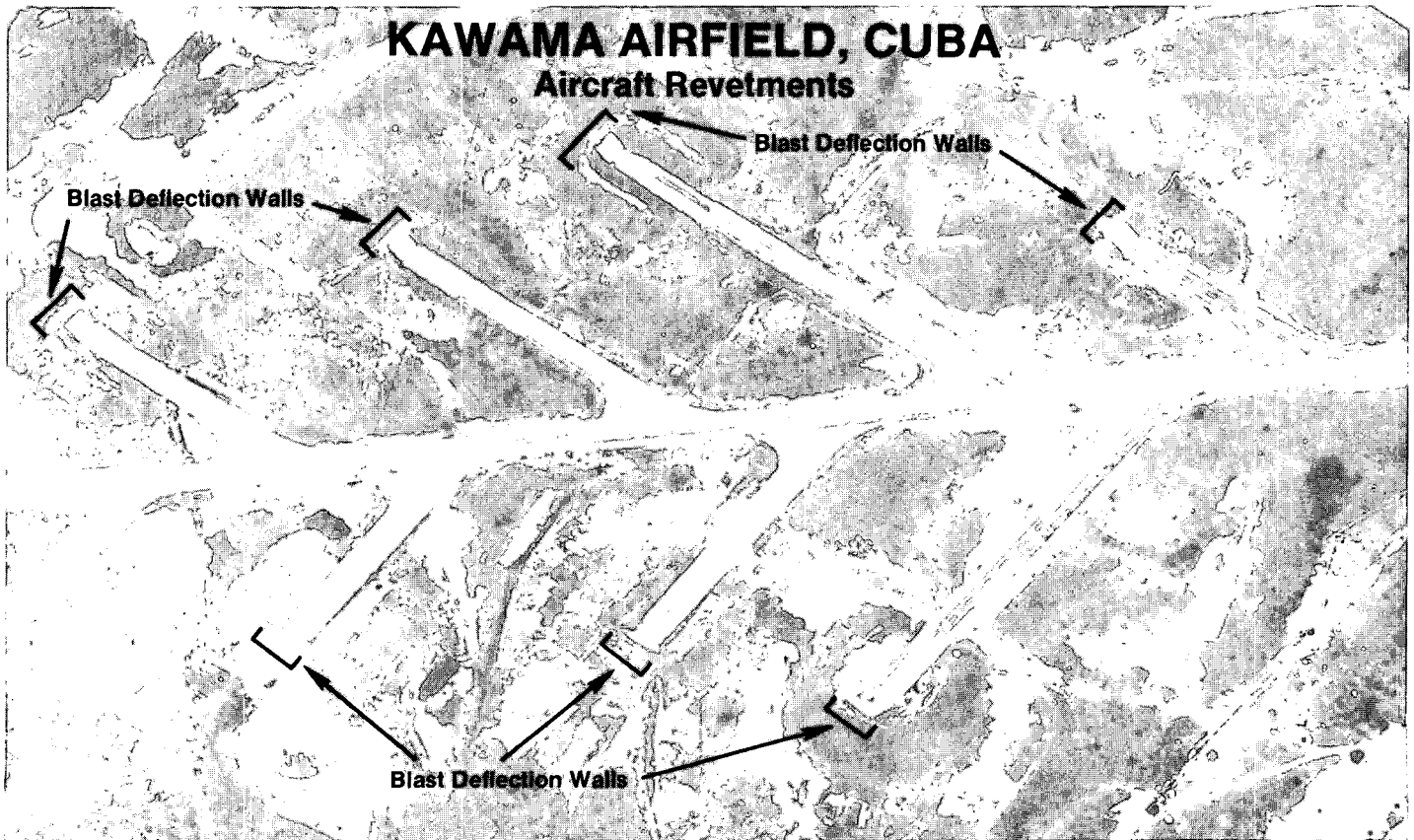
The initial shipments of Mi-24s arrived at Sandino Airport in November 1984. The helicopters are shipped in crates and assembled at the airport, probably with the assistance of Soviet or Cuban technicians.

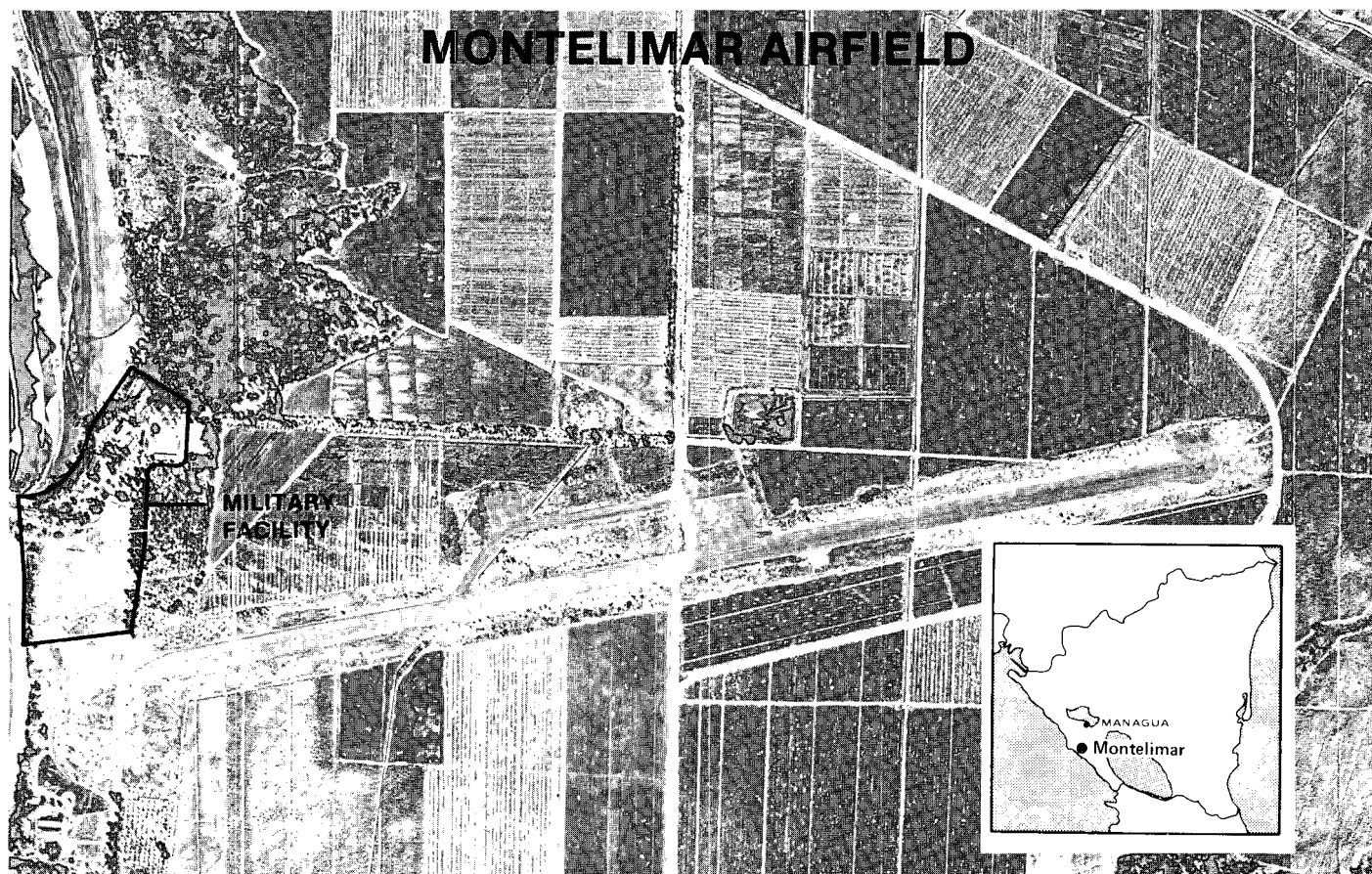


The Sandinistas could soon have the Punta Huete runway operational. It is in an isolated region ideal for military use. Its planned 10,000-foot runway, the longest military runway in Central America, could accommodate any aircraft in the Soviet inventory.

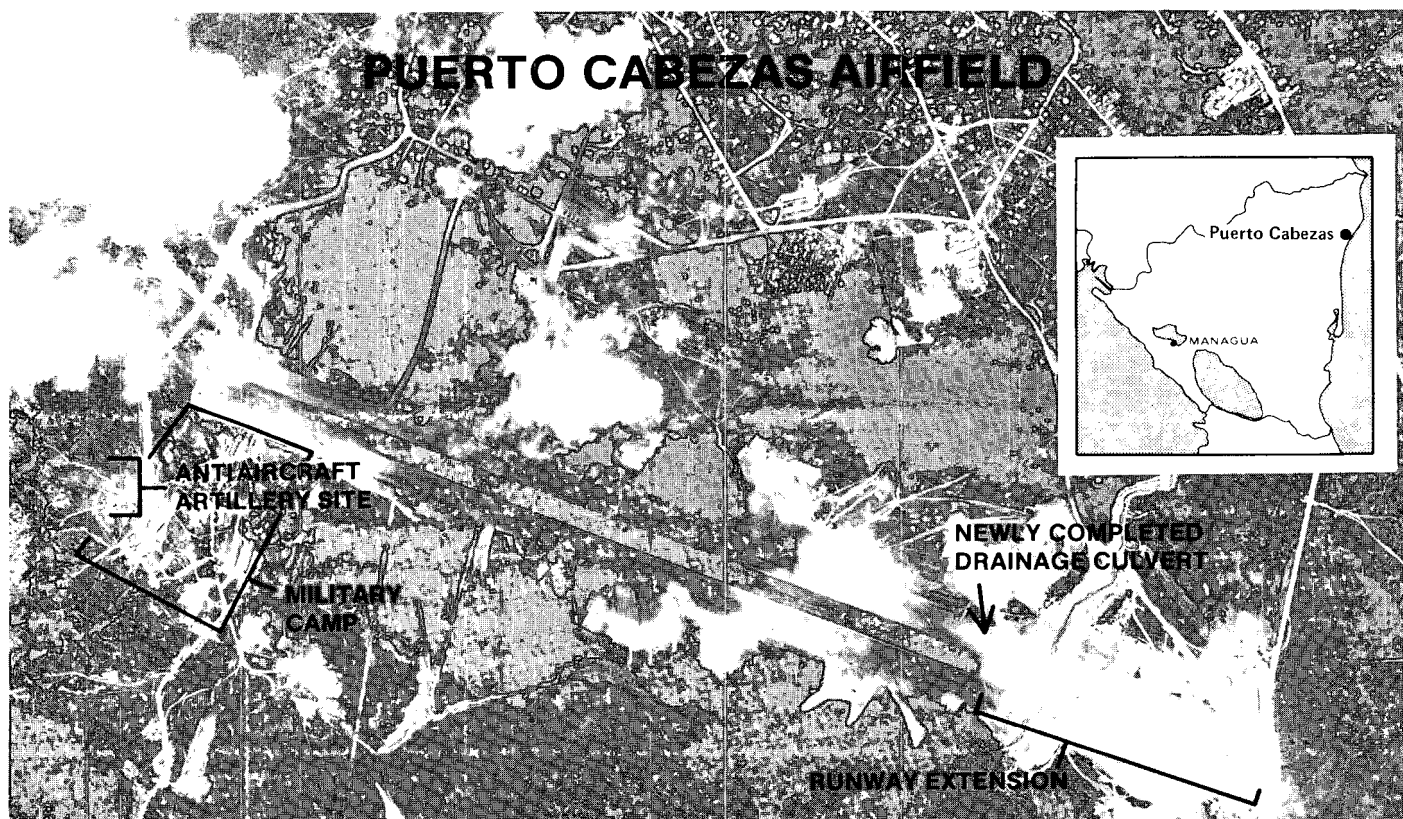


Punta Huete (above) is designed for jet aircraft. In the revetments are clearly visible the blast deflection walls used for jets. These revetments are similar to those at the Kawama airfield in Cuba (below), which accommodates MiG fighters.

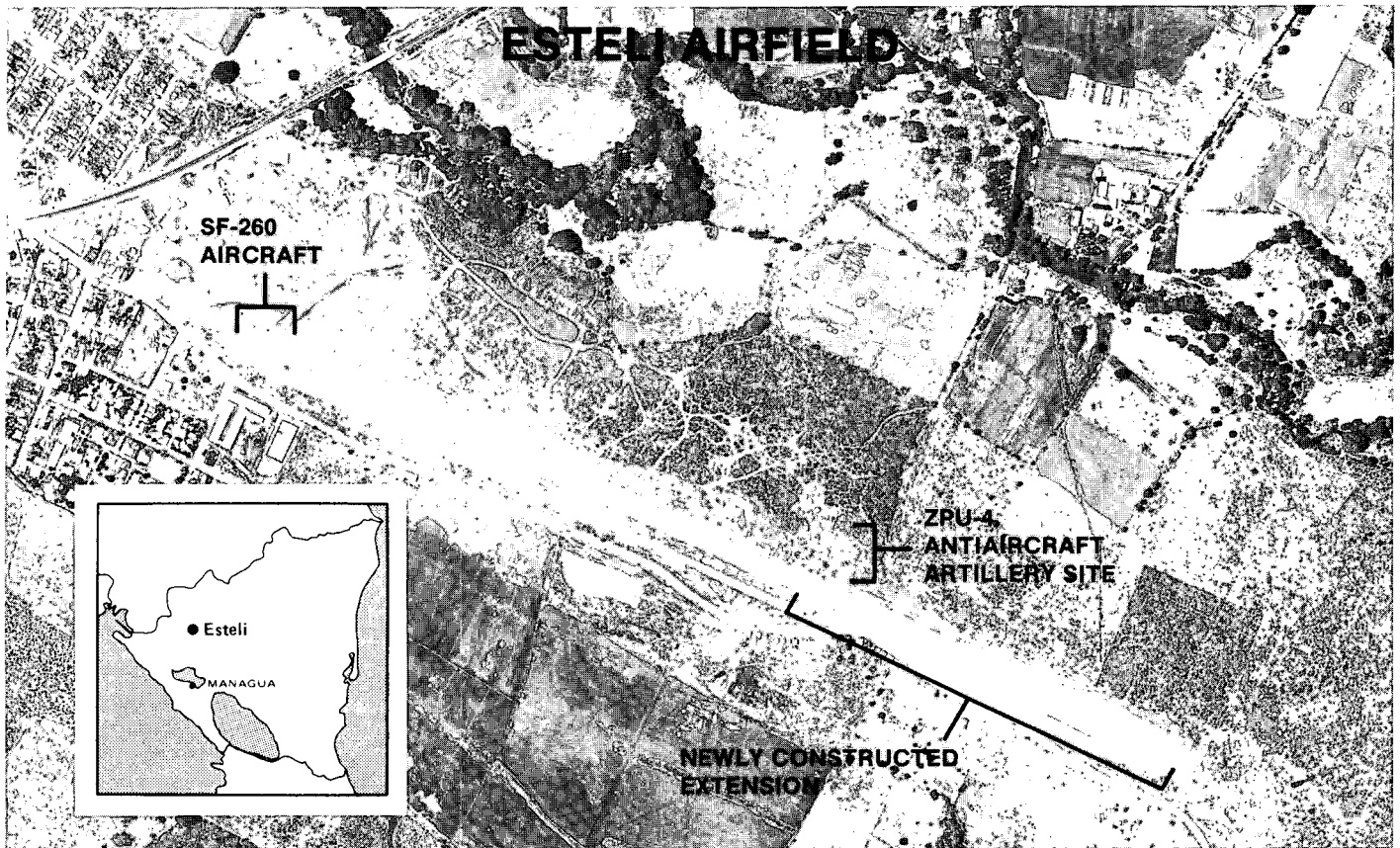




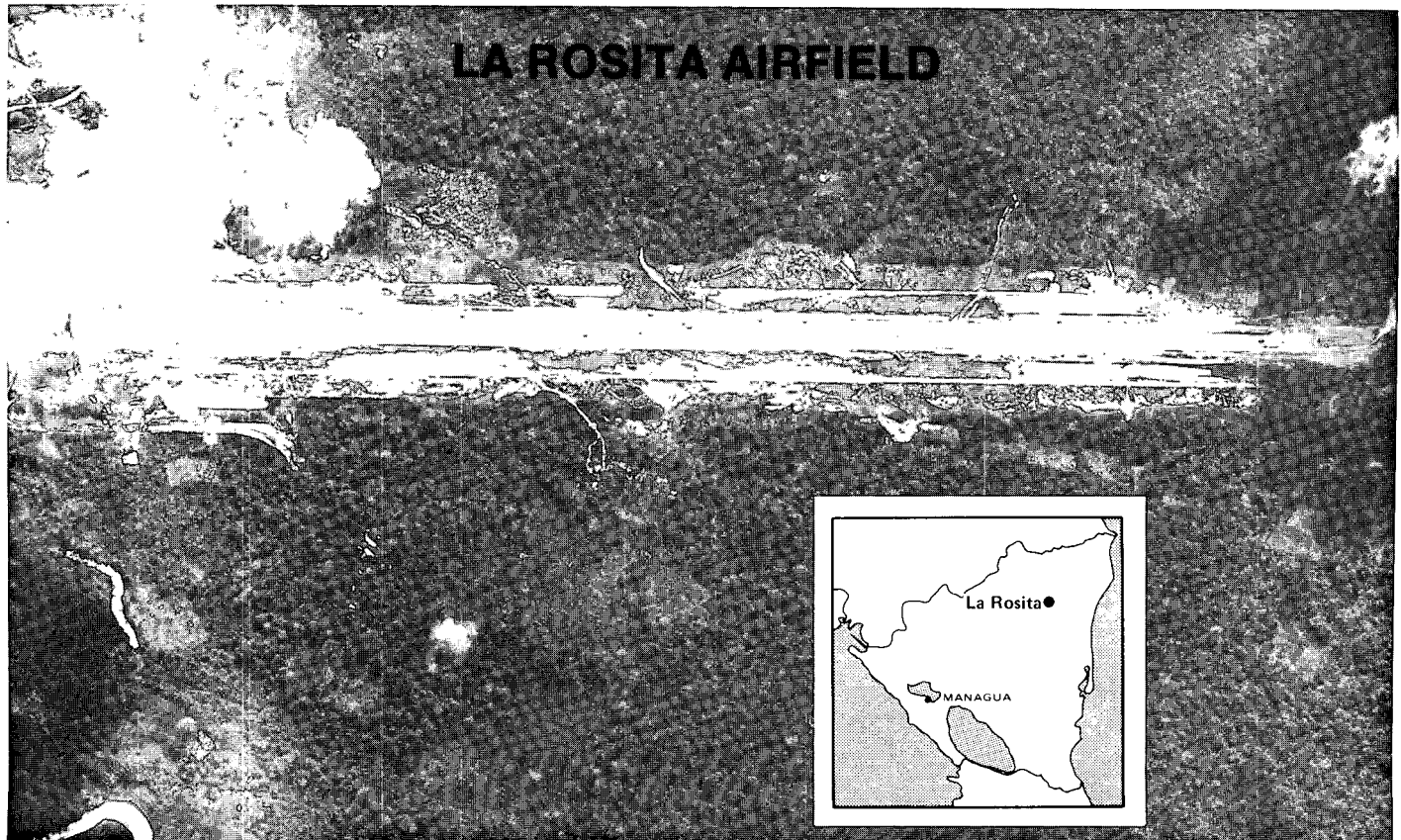
New facilities have been added to the Montelimar airfield.



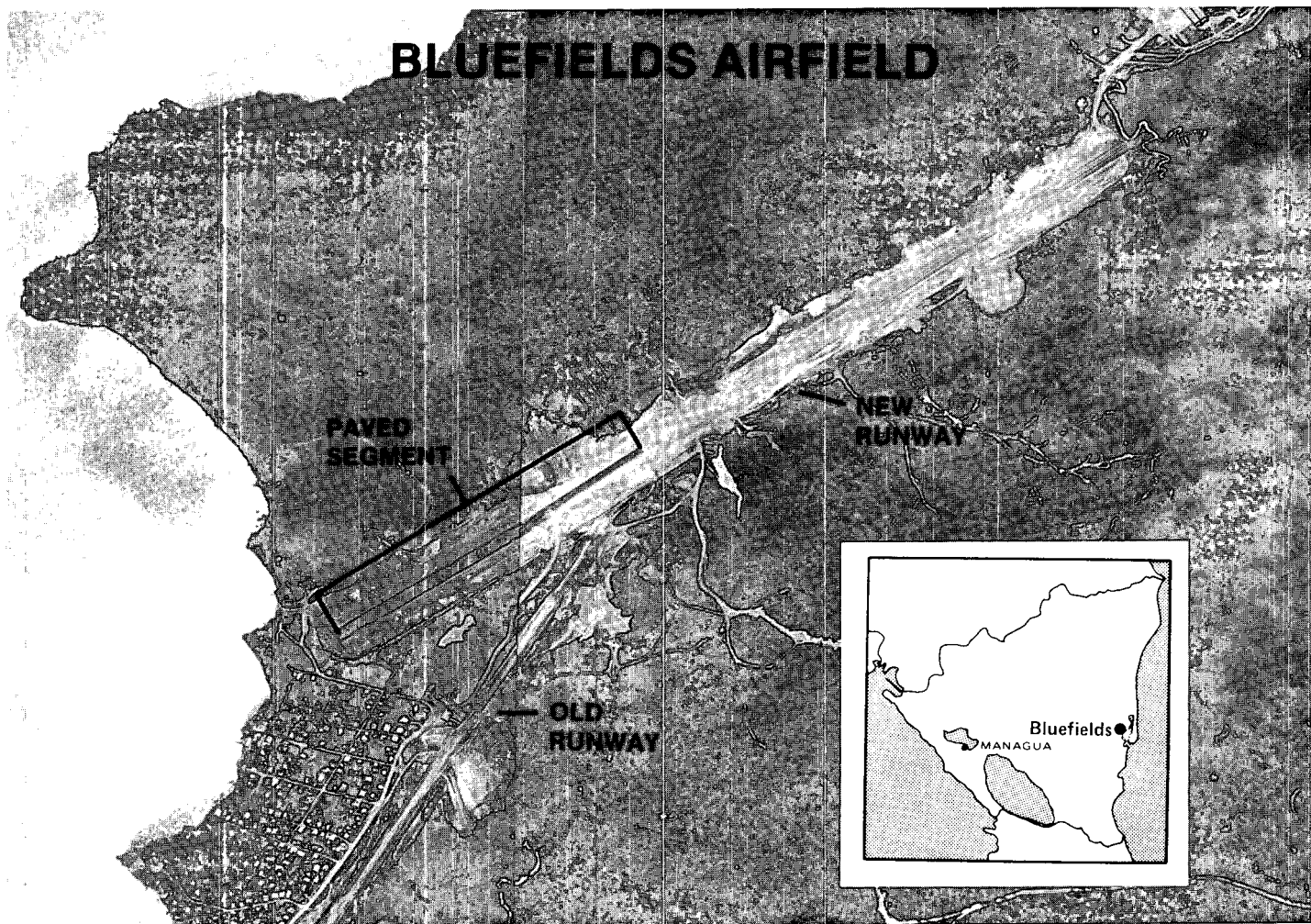
The Sandinistas are upgrading the airfield at Puerto Cabezas and lengthening the runway by more than 1,500 feet.



The runway at Esteli has been lengthened considerably. On the runway are two SF-260 aircraft believed to have been given to the Sandinistas by Libya's Colonel Muammar Qadhafi.



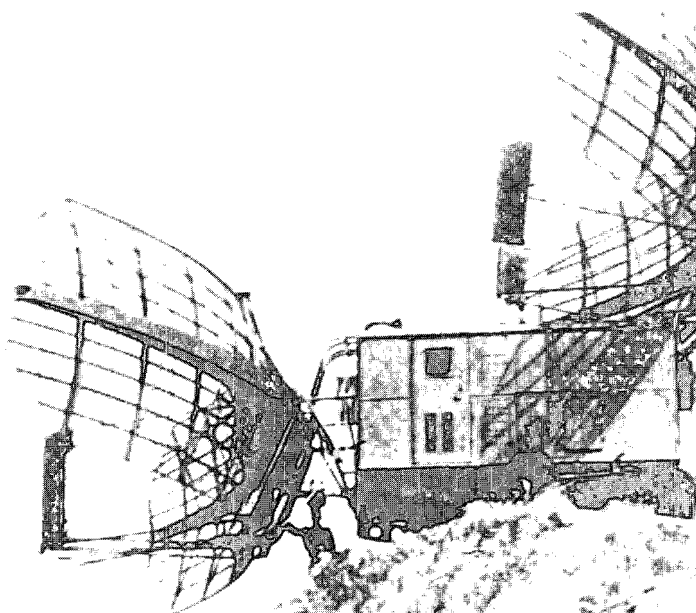
The Sandinistas are constructing an airfield at La Rosita to increase their ability to operate in the Atlantic Coast region.



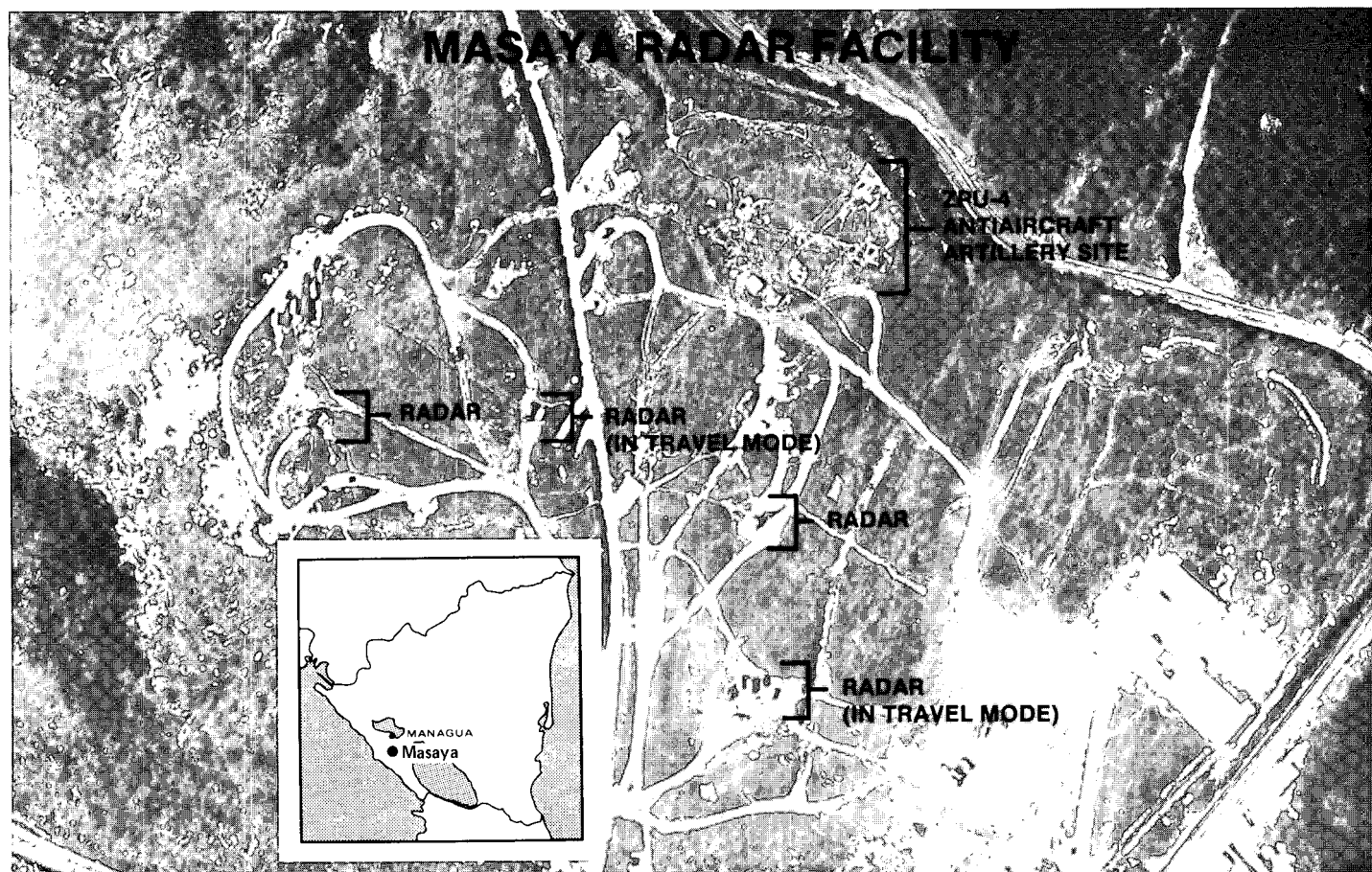
A new runway at Bluefields, more than one-third already paved.

Soviet air warfare doctrine calls for aircraft to operate in a "controlled air environment," that is to say, the aircraft are controlled by command elements on the ground which monitor their actions via radar. In 1983, the first Soviet-made Early Warning/Ground Control-Intercept (EW/GCI) facility in Nicaragua was assembled near Masaya. During 1984, additional radar sites were established at Toro Blanco and Esteli. Early in 1985, a fourth radar system was emplaced at San Juan del Sur. A temporary site at El Bluff has provided coverage of the Atlantic Coast as well. A coastal surveillance radar was emplaced at El Polvon in late 1984. The Sandinistas now have radar coverage over most of Nicaragua and can monitor aircraft movements deep into Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica as well. There is no other comparable radar system anywhere in the region.

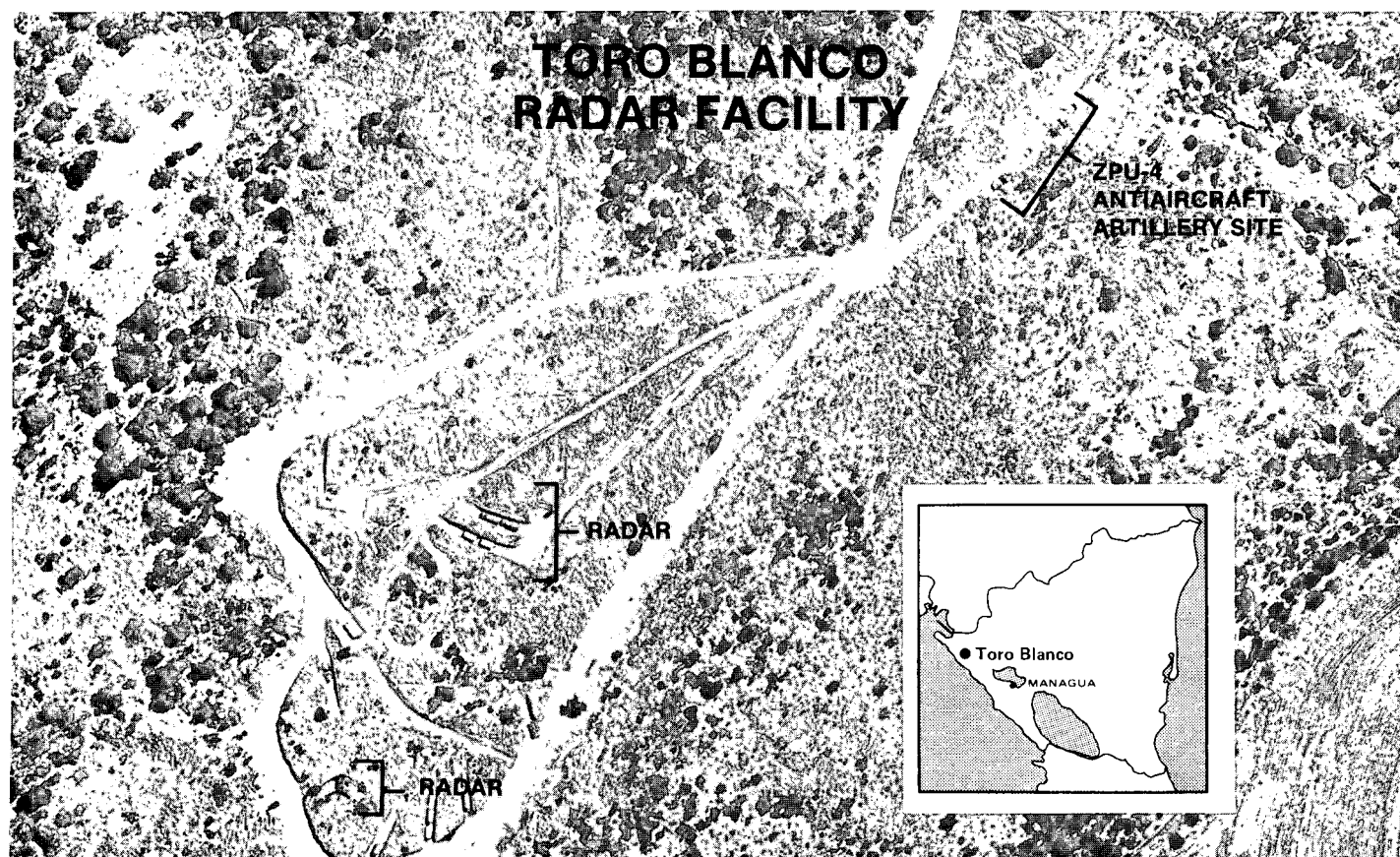
The early warning capability of the radar net also is associated with the Sandinista air defense forces. As early as 1980, the Sandinistas began acquiring ZPU-4, ZU-23, and M-1939 antiaircraft guns and SA-7 surface-to-air missiles. The S-60, a 57-millimeter cannon with fire control radar, was added in 1984. Nearly 200 pieces of antiaircraft artillery and over 300 SA-7 missile launchers now ring major installations.

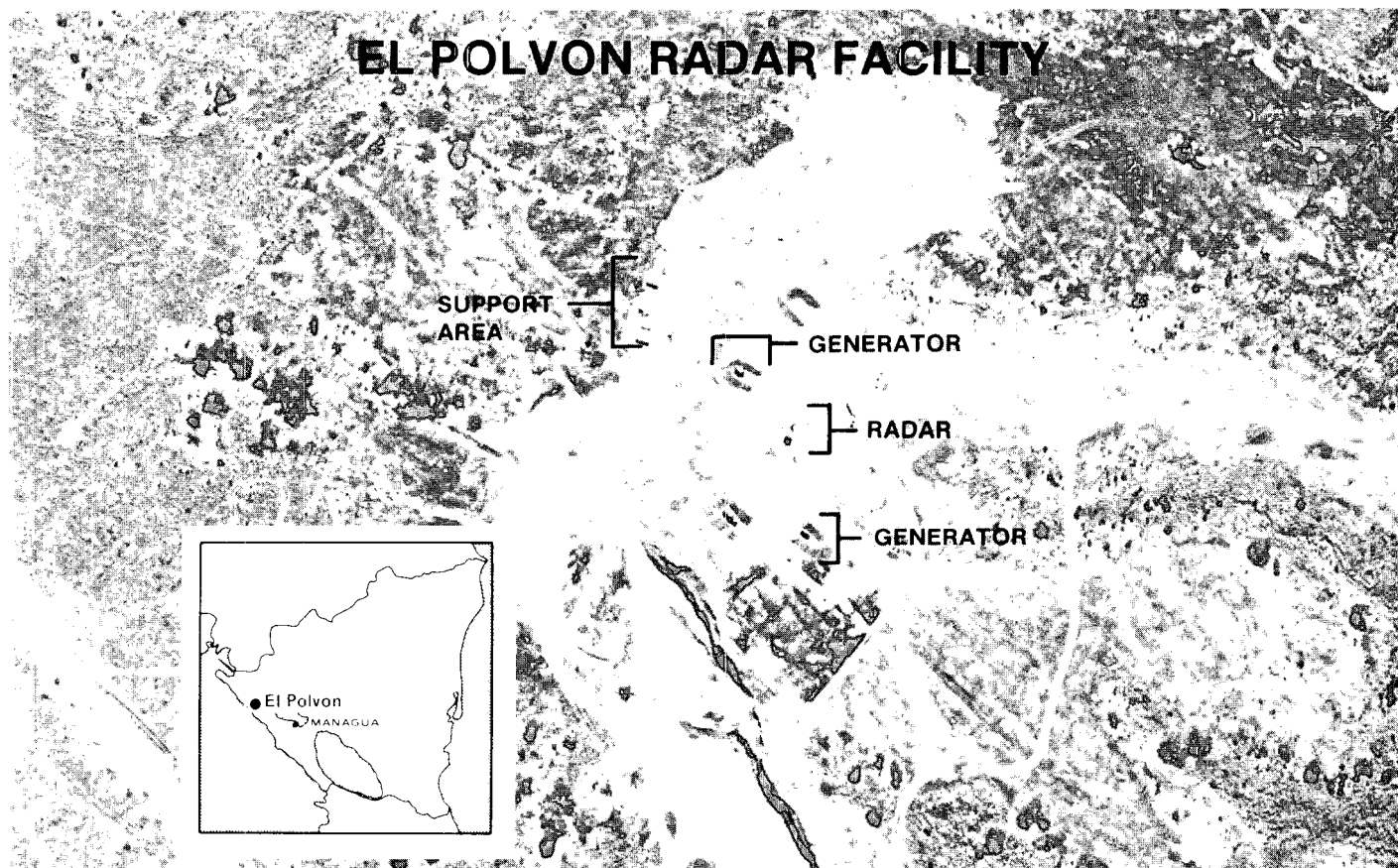
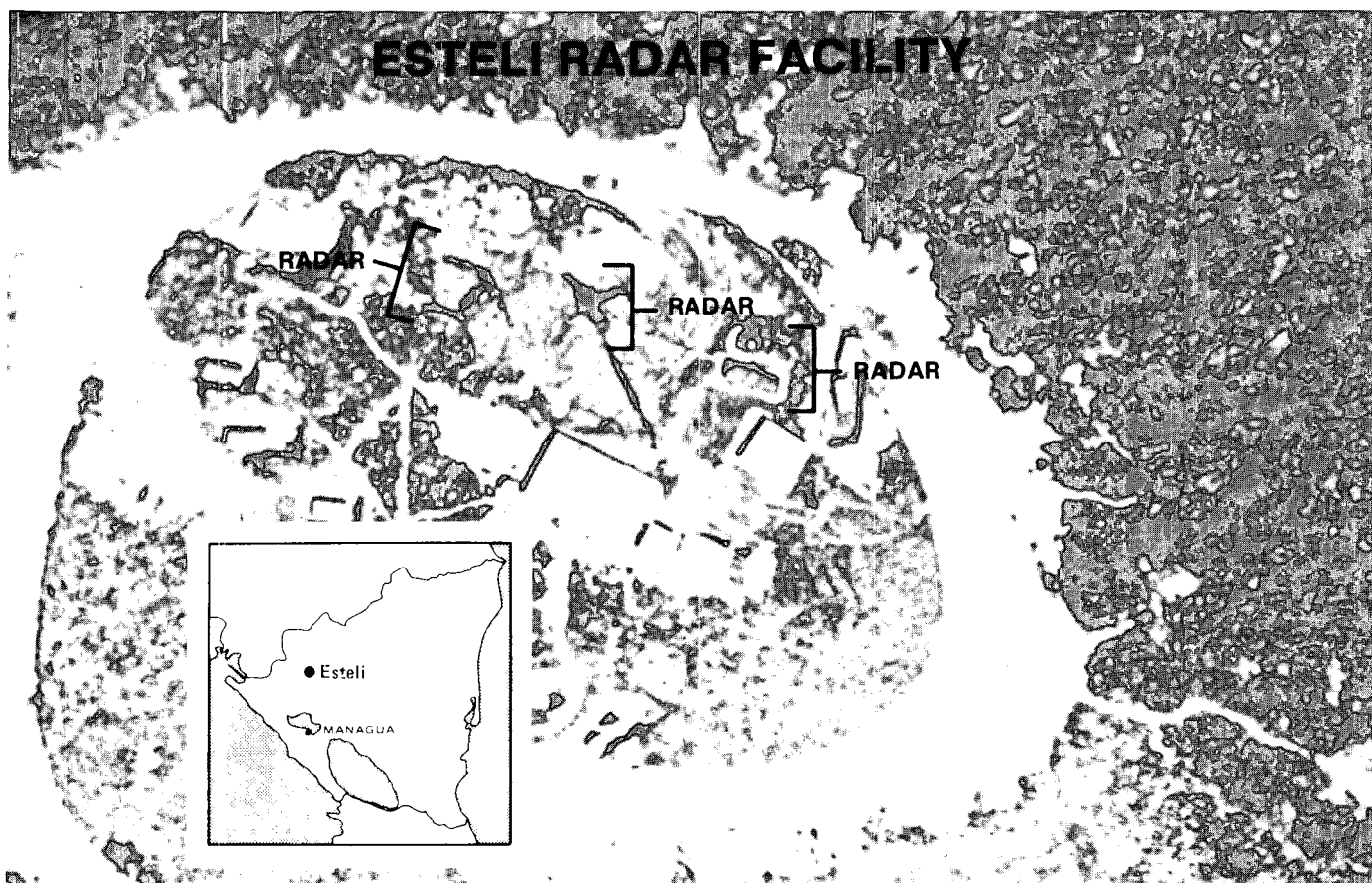


Soviet-built radars give the Sandinistas a radar capability without equal in Central America. This system now covers most of Nicaragua and can monitor aircraft movements deep into neighboring countries.



The Masaya early warning/ground control-intercept capable radar facility was assembled in 1983.





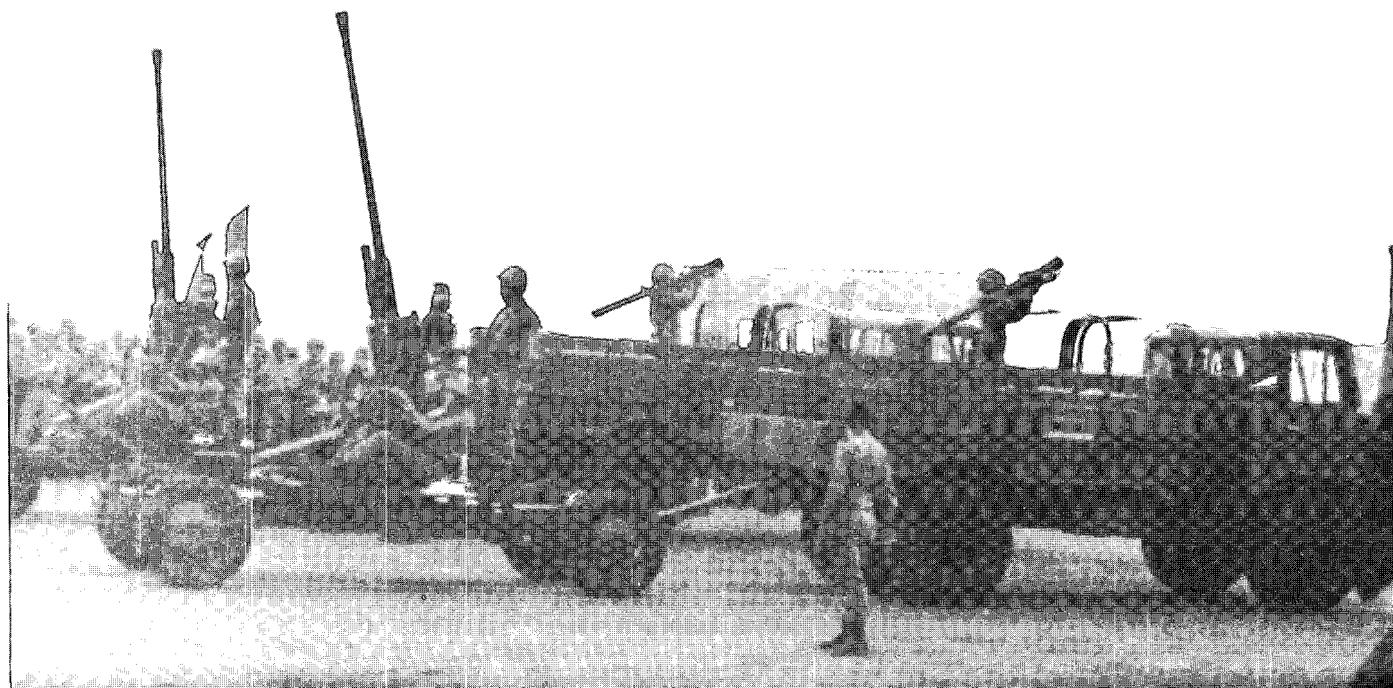
A coastal surveillance radar facility recently constructed at El Polvon.



The SA-7 is a surface-to-air missile with an infrared guidance system. The Soviets have provided the Sandinistas more than 300 SA-7 launchers, such as this one held by a Soviet soldier.

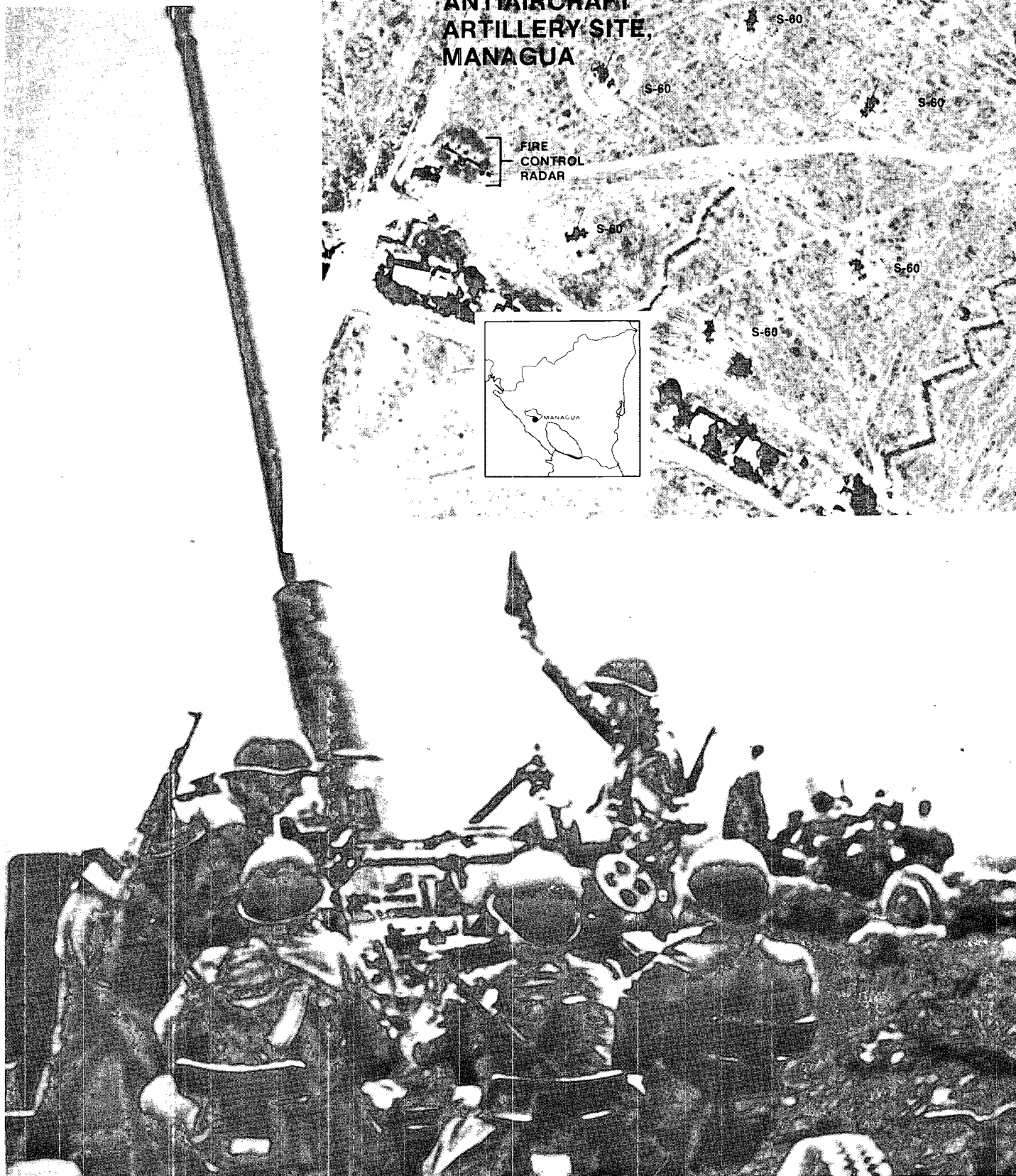


The ZU-23 is a 23-millimeter anti-aircraft gun. Each of its two barrels can fire at the rate of 800-1,000 rounds per minute. It has an effective range of more than 8,000 feet.



The M-1939, a 37-millimeter anti-aircraft gun, can fire at the rate of 160-180 rounds per minute. It has an effective range of more than 8,000 feet. There are nine M-1939 sites in the Managua area alone. Notice that in the bed of each truck, a soldier holds an SA-7 missile launcher.

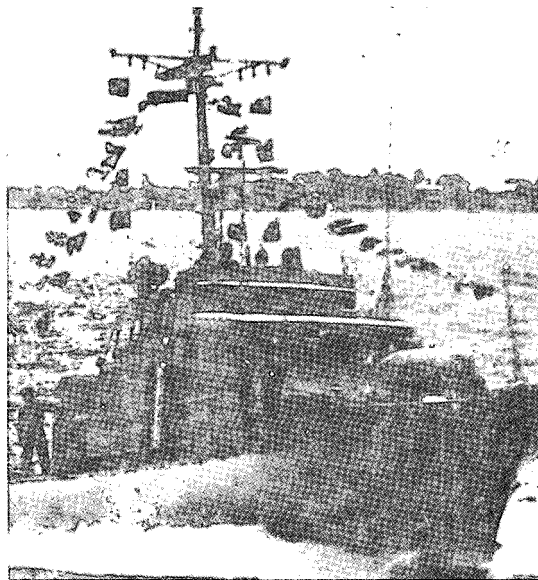
This is one of several S-60 anti-aircraft gun sites in the Managua area.



The S-60 is a 57-millimeter automatic anti-aircraft gun which can operate with a fire control radar system or through optical sighting. It can fire 105-120 rounds per minute, and has an effective range of nearly 20,000 feet. It was added to the Sandinistas' arsenal in 1984, further enhancing their anti-aircraft capabilities.

Navy

The 1,000-troop Sandinista Navy (*Marina de Guerra Sandinista*—MGS) has similarly undergone both a qualitative and quantitative transformation since 1979. Somoza's "navy" consisted of a handful of old patrol boats. The Sandinistas set out to acquire a fleet of more modern vessels. In 1983, they acquired two French Vedette patrol boats and two Soviet ZHUK patrol boats. In 1983–84, North Korea supplied two KIMJIN and two SINHUNG patrol boats. In 1984, Cuba delivered a third ZHUK and two YEVGENYA inshore minesweepers. In November 1984, the Soviet merchant ship *Bakuriani* delivered four Polish-built K-8 minesweeping boats.



This Soviet-made ZHUK patrol boat is one of more than a dozen vessels provided to the Sandinista navy by the Soviet Union, Cuba, and North Korea.

Cuban and Soviet Assistance

The Sandinista military build-up would have been impossible without massive assistance from Cuba and the Soviet Union. Castro provided the Sandinistas shelter and training during their struggle against Somoza, and he supplied them with weapons for their final offensive in 1979. The Cuban official who commanded the support network based in Costa Rica, Julian Lopez Diaz, was appointed Cuba's ambassador to Nicaragua as soon as the Sandinistas were in power.

Within a week of the fall of Somoza, Cuba had placed about 100 military and security personnel in Nicaragua. By early 1985, the number of Cuban military/security advisers in Nicaragua had grown to some 3,000.¹⁰ These Cubans permeate the Ministries of Defense and Interior, operating at all levels of the armed forces from the General Staff in Managua down to the battalion and, in some cases, even company levels. They are prominent in military training facilities and in areas where technical expertise is required, such as aviation and telecommunications. An additional 30 to 40 Soviet and more than 60 East German military/security advisers also operate in Nicaragua.

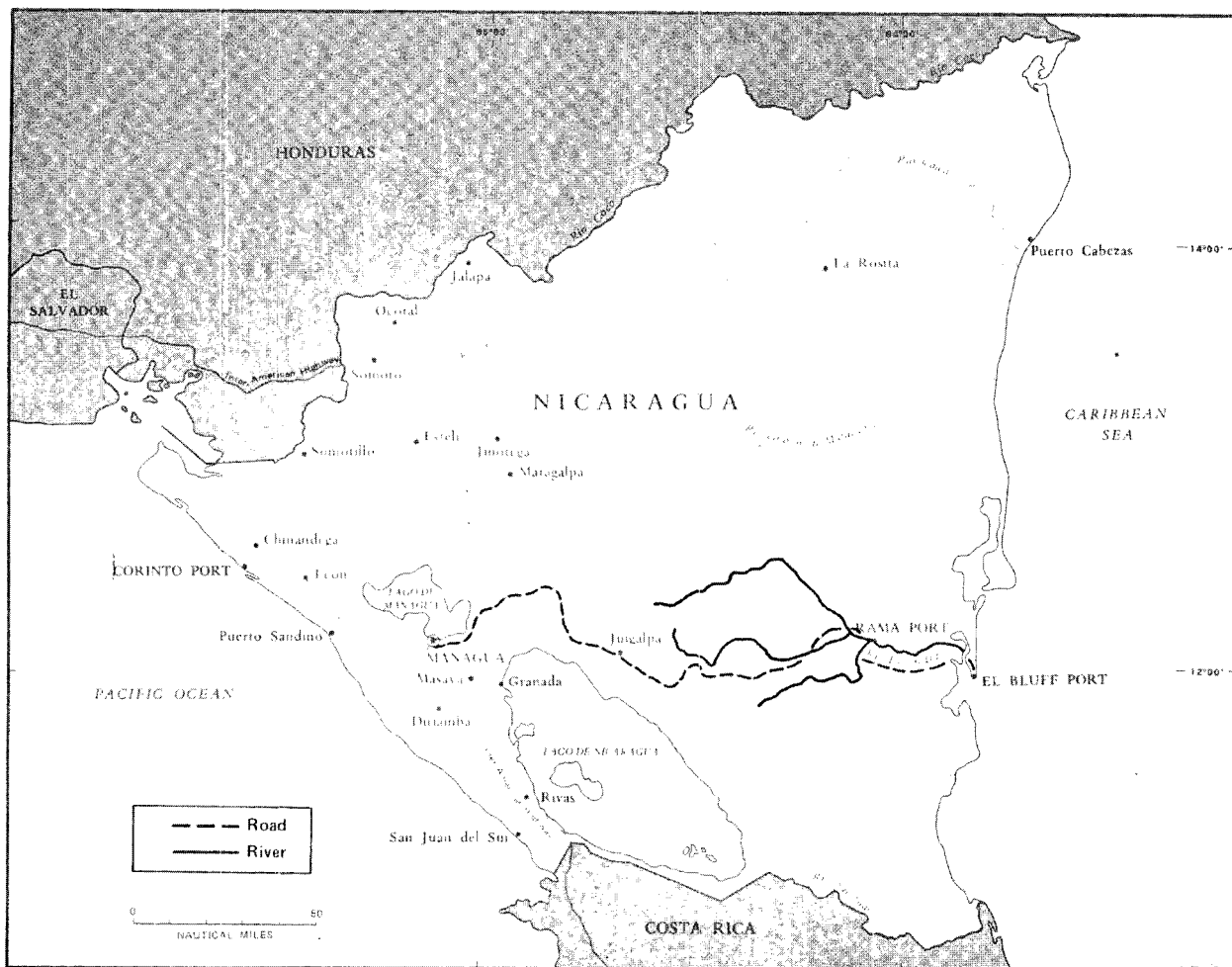
These Cuban and Soviet-bloc advisers have strongly affected the organization and tactics of the Sandinista military. The units of the Sandinista army and militia are modeled after their Cuban counterparts; in 1980, the Nicaraguans even copied the Cubans' four-digit unit identification system. Some Nicaraguan military bases are modeled after similar facilities in Cuba.

Until recently, the Soviets used surrogates to mask the extent of their own involvement in the military build-up. Cuba was the first to make substantial deliveries of Soviet-made arms, and later Algeria and Bulgaria took on this role. Direct Soviet shipment of military-associated goods occurred by 1981, but not until late 1984 did a Soviet ship deliver major weapons systems—Mi-24s and K-8s—directly to the Sandinistas.

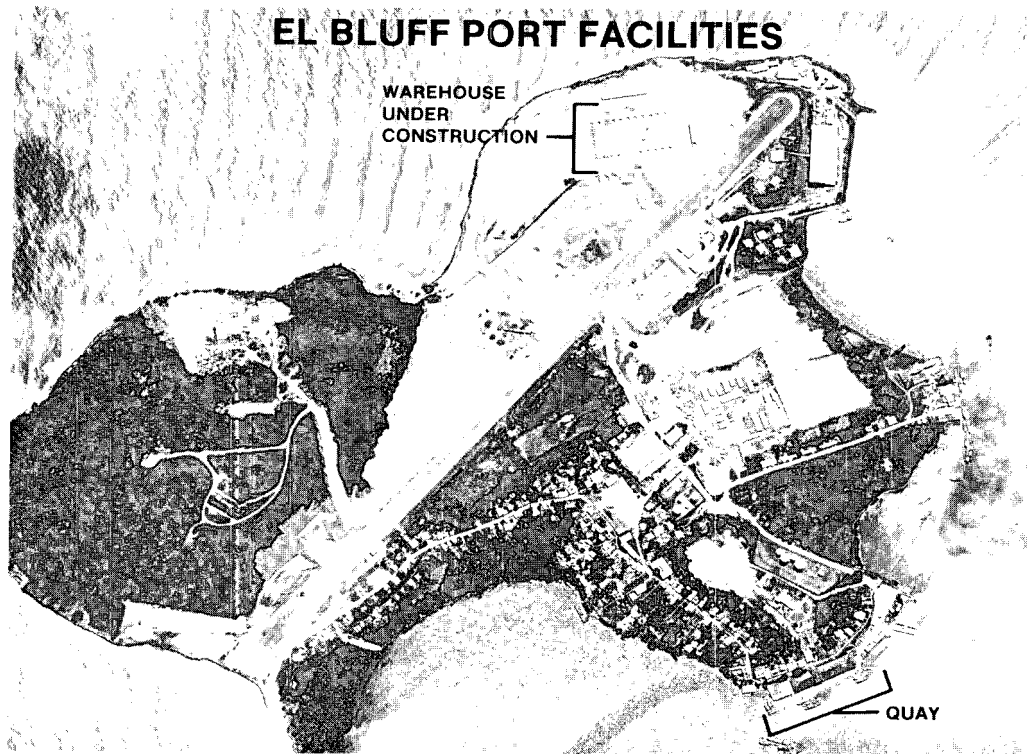
The details of the agreements that led up to these assistance programs remain secret. Nevertheless, documents captured in Grenada in 1983 (and available for review at the U.S. National Archives in Washington, D.C.) reveal the method employed by the Soviet bloc to arm a surrogate.¹¹ In the case of Grenada, Maurice Bishop's regime signed five secret military agreements—three with the U.S.S.R., one with Cuba, and one with North Korea. Military equipment began arriving in Grenada within a few months of the signing of these documents. Since Soviet military hardware began arriving in Nicaragua in early 1980, it is likely that the initial secret arms agreements between Nicaragua and Cuba and the Soviet Union were concluded shortly after the Sandinistas seized power in 1979. (At that time, the Sandinistas were receiving hundreds of millions of dollars of economic aid from the United States and other Western sources.) The influx of military aid from the Soviet Union and its allies has risen steadily. In the past 3 years, the number of Soviet-bloc ship deliveries of military equipment has risen from 6 in 1982 to 25 in 1983 to 37 in 1984. The total value of the tanks, helicopters, and other war materiel shipped to Nicaragua was approaching \$500 million by early 1985.

¹⁰The Sandinistas' decision to turn to the Cubans was one of choice, not necessity. For example, immediately after its July 1979 victory, Panama sent military advisers and trainers to Nicaragua to help in converting the Sandinista guerrillas into a regular army. By the end of 1979, however, the preeminent position of the Cubans was firmly established, and the Panamanians returned home.

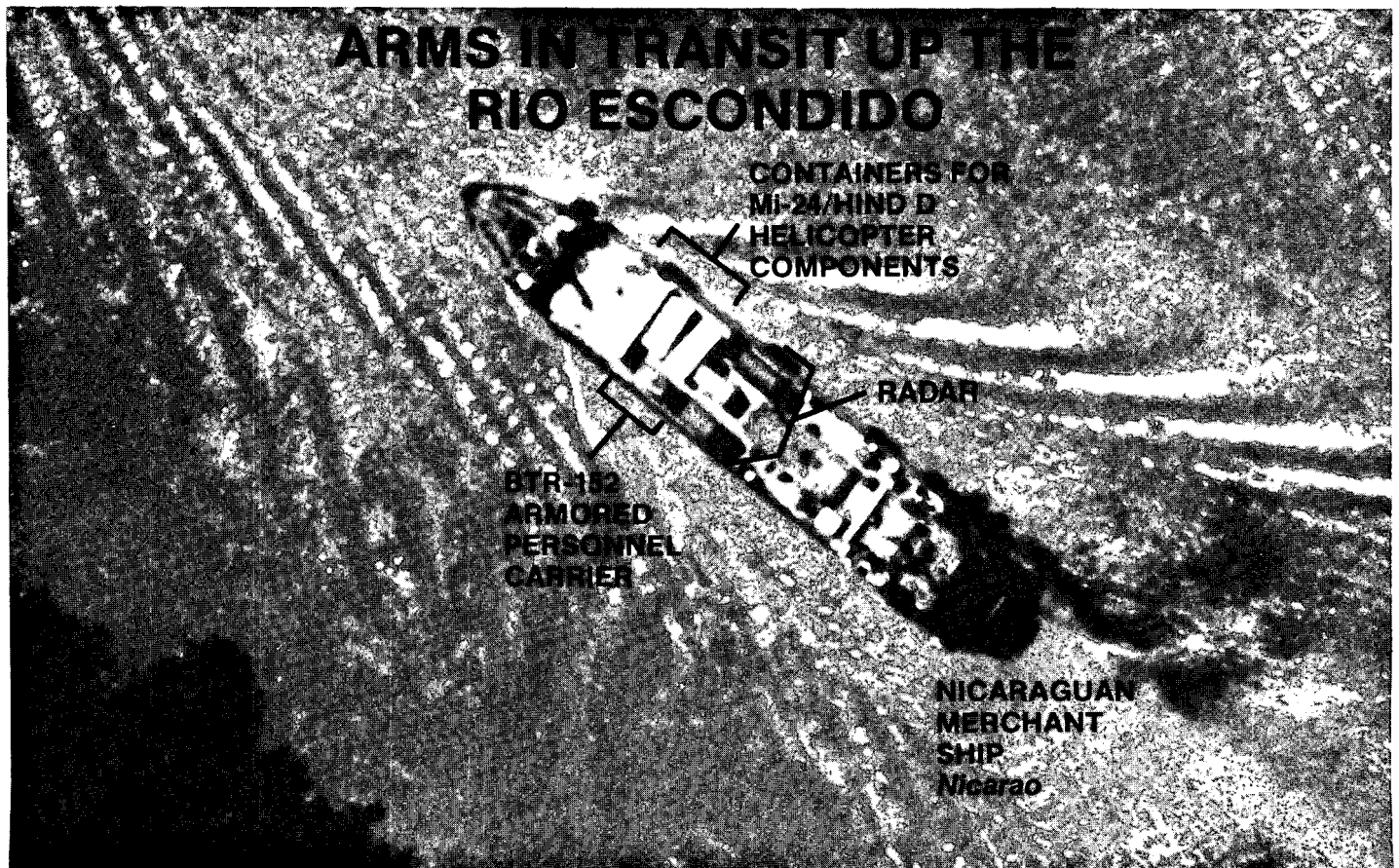
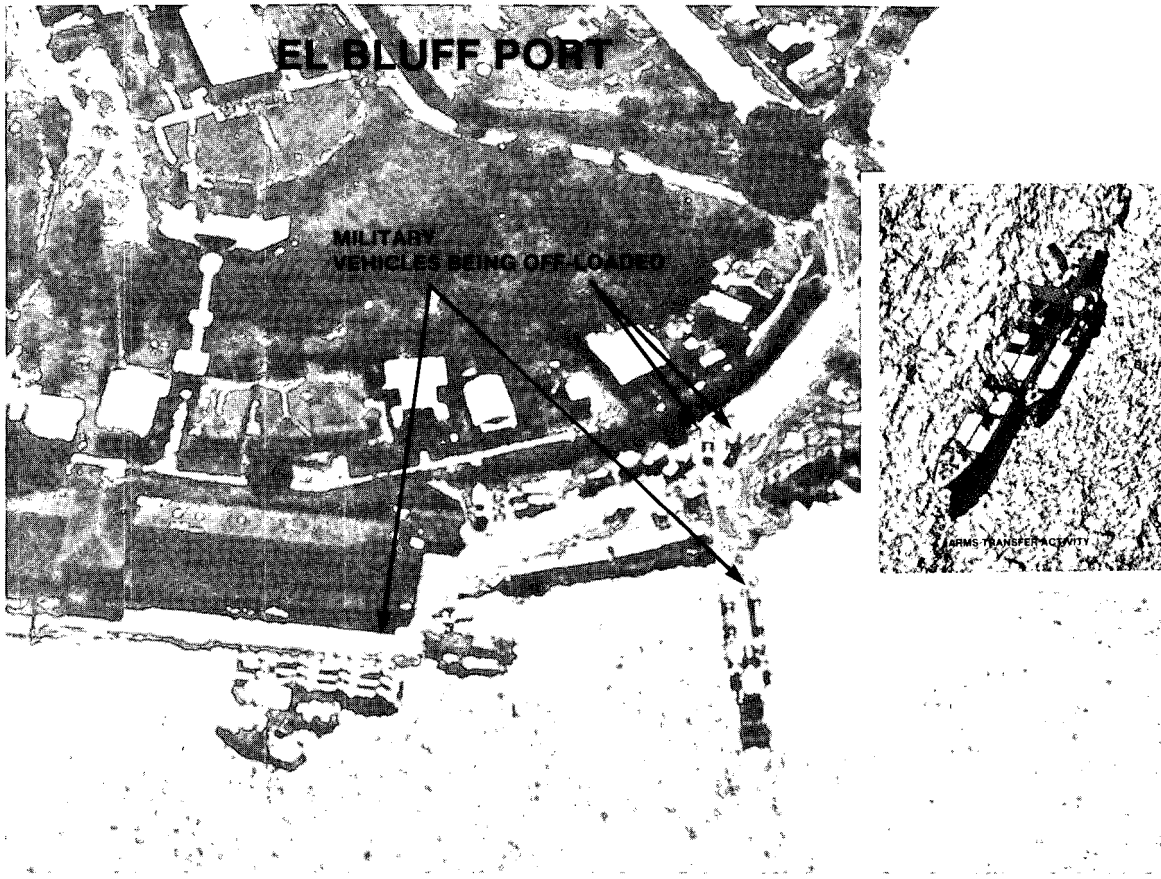
¹¹See Department of State/Department of Defense publications, *Grenada: A Preliminary Report*, December 16, 1983, and *Grenada Documents: An Overview and Selection*, September 1984.



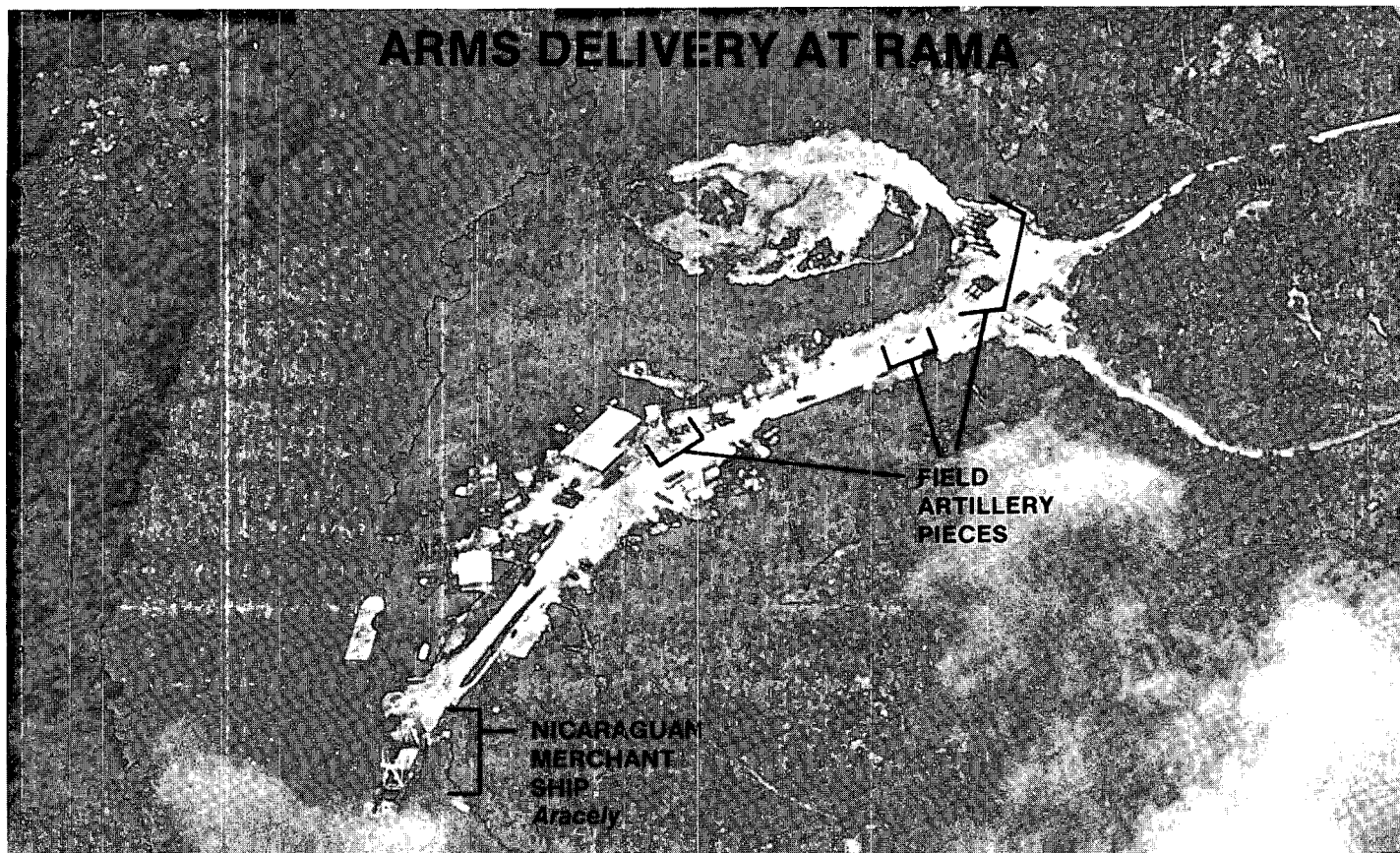
The two main ports used for arms deliveries are El Bluff/Rama on the Caribbean and Corinto on the Pacific.



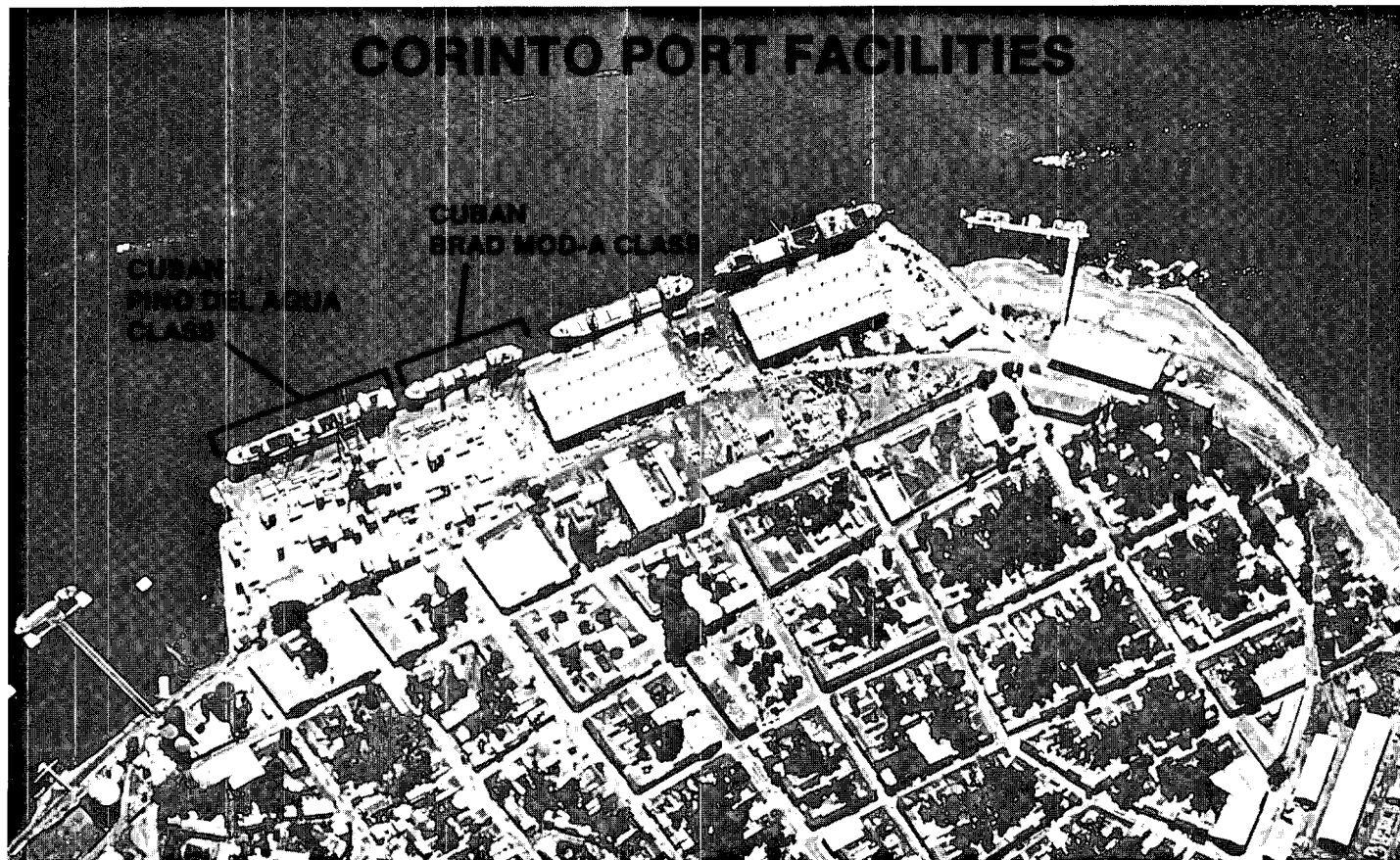
Most of the Sandinistas' heavy arms have been delivered to the Caribbean port of El Bluff.



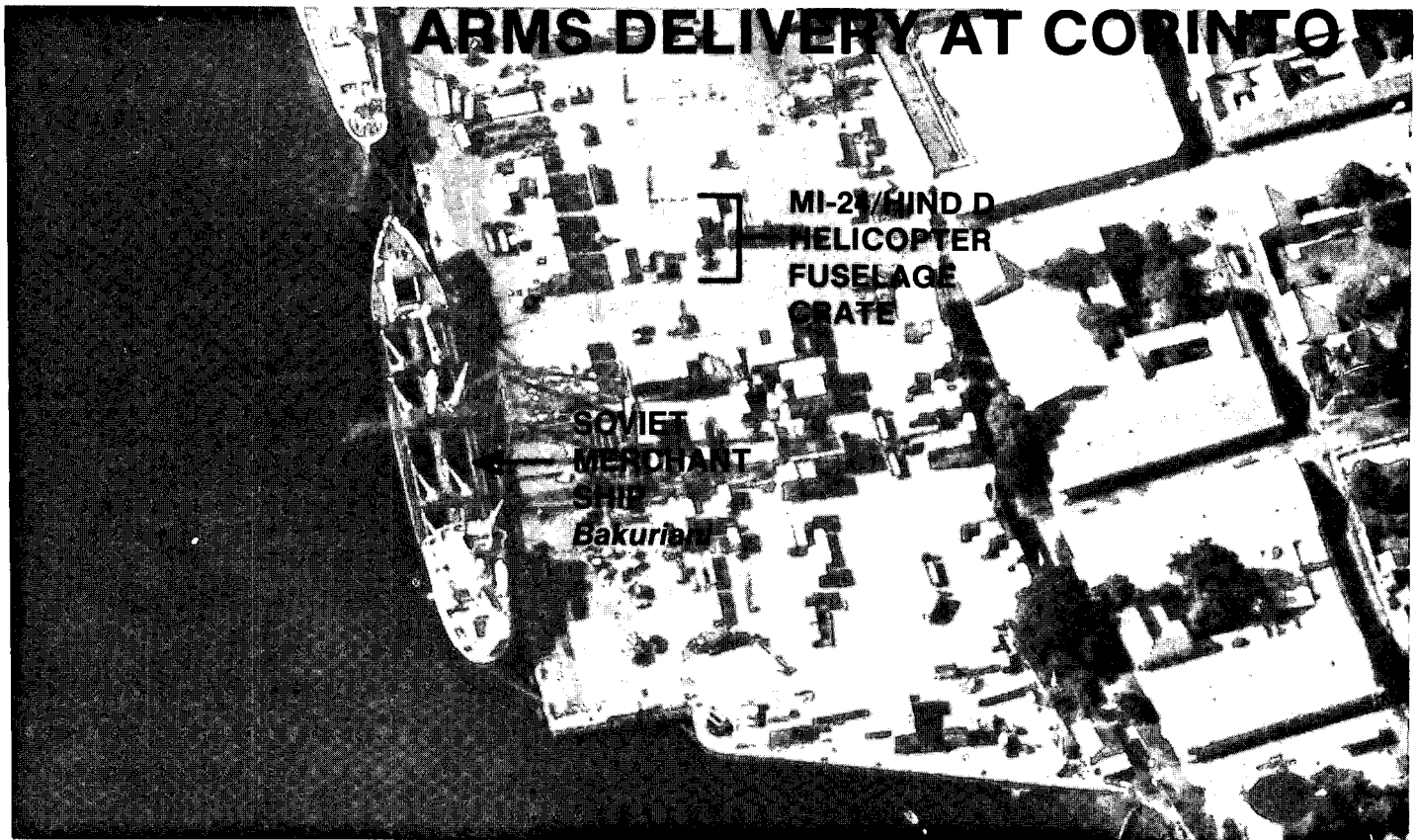
Smaller ships such as the *Nicarao* transport the military equipment from El Bluff up the Rio Escondido to Rama.



At Rama, the arms are unloaded and then transported overland to Managua.

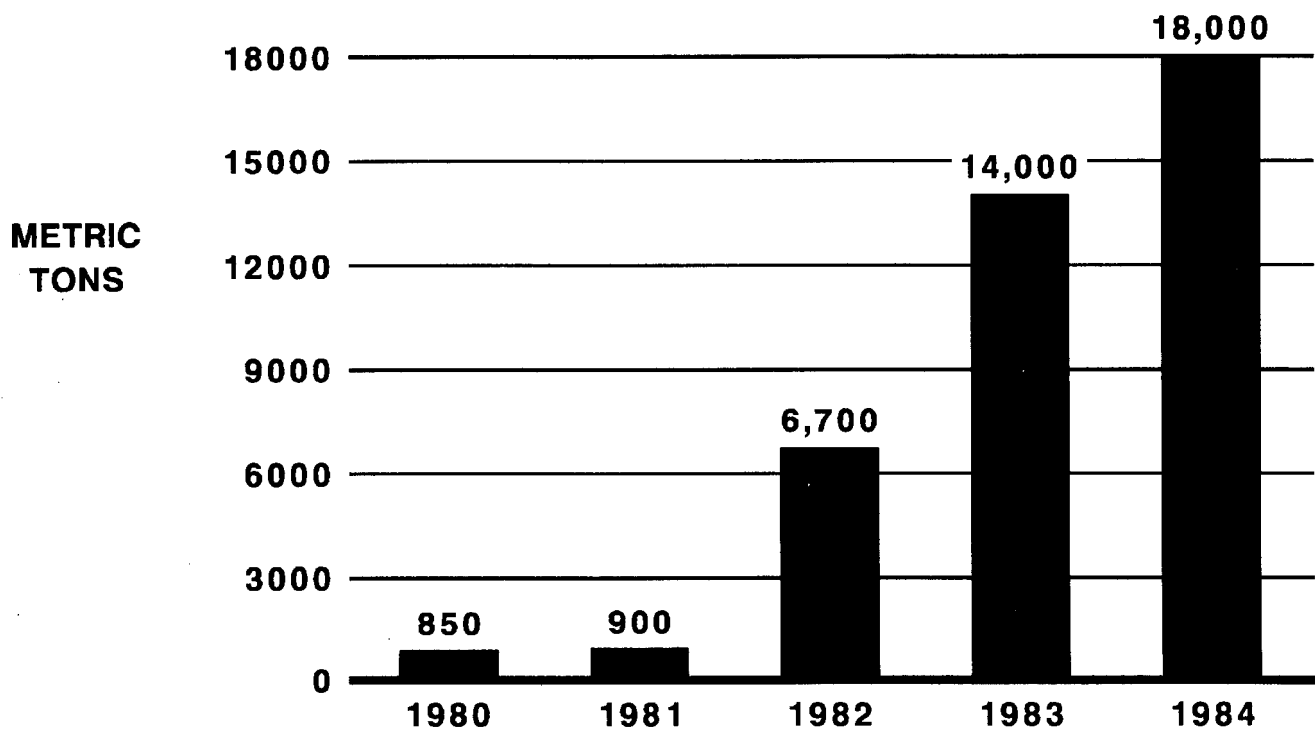


Corinto is Nicaragua's principal port, and large quantities of military cargo are delivered there.



In November 1984, the Soviet merchant ship *Bakuriani* delivered war materiel to Nicaragua, including this Mi-24/HIND D attack helicopter.

SOVIET-BLOC MILITARY DELIVERIES TO NICARAGUA



Assistance from—and to—Terrorists

The FSLN has long maintained close ties with numerous terrorist organizations and radical states. During the 1970s, a number of Sandinistas trained and fought with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). After the Sandinistas took power, the PLO opened an "embassy" in Managua and assigned pilots and mechanics to assist the Sandinista air force. Libya has provided the Sandinistas with both equipment, such as SF-260 aircraft and helicopters, and personnel, including pilots and mechanics.

The Sandinistas not only receive assistance from terrorists, they also provide assistance to terrorists. They have collaborated closely with Marxist subversives throughout Central America, particularly the Salvadoran guerrillas. Working with the Cubans, the FSLN provides these groups with training camps, command and control bases, and safe houses. The Sandinistas support a logistical system for the transport of arms through Nicaragua to guerrillas in neighboring countries.

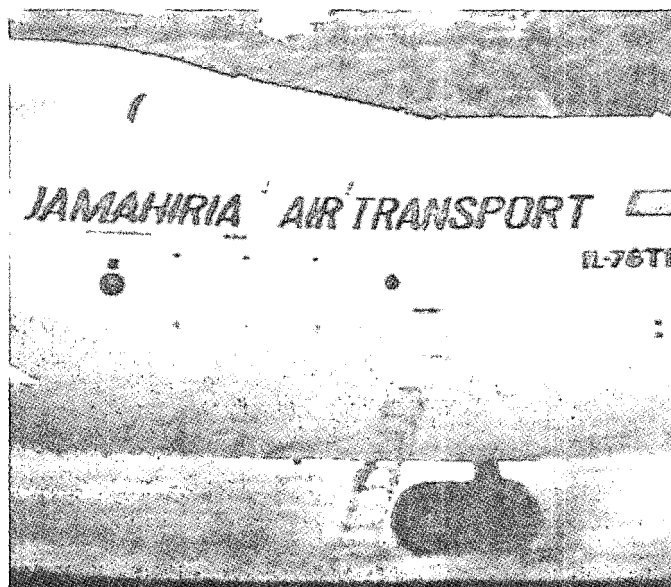
The Sandinistas' ties are not limited to groups in Central America, however, for they also have links with groups such as the Montoneros of Argentina, the 19th of April Movement (M-19) of Colombia, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) of Chile, the Tupamaros of Uruguay, the Basque Homeland and Liberty (ETA) separatist movement of Spain, the Baader-Meinhoff gang of Germany, and the Red Brigades of Italy.¹² (In February 1985, Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi complained in a public statement before the Italian Parliament that Nicaragua had become a safehaven for fugitive Italian terrorists.) Some of these groups have been implicated in terrorist attacks against the Sandinistas' opponents carried out in third countries.¹³

¹²For additional information on the FSLN's connections with international terrorist organizations, see Juan O. Tamayo's "Sandinistas Attract a Who's Who of Terrorists" and "World's Leftists Find a Haven in Nicaragua," *Miami Herald*, March 3, 1985, p. A1.

¹³See Department of State/Department of Defense publication, *Background Paper: Nicaragua's Military Build-up and Support for Central American Subversion*, July 1984.



In May 1984, Eden Pastora (*Comandante Cero*) was wounded in an assassination attempt in which four people—including an American reporter—were killed and 27 people injured. Pastora had been a Sandinista hero during the revolution but broke with the FSLN because of its efforts to implant Marxism in Nicaragua and its close ties with Cuba and the Soviet Union. In June 1983, Pastora and former Nicaraguan Junta member Alfonso Robelo, the principal leaders of the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE), were targeted for assassination by the Nicaraguan General Directorate of State Security (DGSE). The attempt failed when the bomb detonated prematurely and killed the two would-be assassins. In November 1984, Robelo was injured and his fiancée crippled in yet another assassination attempt.



Libyan aircraft (above and right) transporting large quantities of weapons to Nicaragua (falsely manifested as medical supplies) were detained in Brazil in April 1983.

Recruitment and Conscription

The Sandinistas initially had no difficulty in finding recruits for their military. The Nicaraguan people had supported the revolution against Somoza, and many youths eagerly joined the ranks of the EPS. Gradually, however, voluntary enlistment declined as disillusionment with the FSLN became widespread. To meet the goals for their military build-up, the Sandinistas began using a variety of coercive measures at schools and workplaces, as well as the Sandinista Defense Committees (*Comites de Defensa Sandinista*—CDS), the infamous “block committees” modeled after the Cuban Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, to compel men and women to enlist in the army, the reserves, or militia units.

When these tactics failed to provide sufficient manpower, the Sandinistas resorted to the draft. In July 1983, Defense Minister Humberto Ortega proclaimed that the government would adopt mandatory conscription. Despite widespread opposition, the Sandinistas enacted the draft law in September, calling it Patriotic Military Service (*Servicio Militar Patriotico*—SMP). Technically, the law made males aged 18 to 40 eligible for the draft, with those in the 18 to 21 age bracket subject to being called up effective January 1, 1984, and those over 21 subject to subsequent callups. It also provided deferments for those in special categories, such as government workers with key jobs. In practice, the Sandinistas began inducting youths by late 1983, and six rounds of callups had taken place by early 1985. The Sandinistas have claimed that 30,000 Nicaraguans have been drafted, but many Nicaraguans believe that the real number is far higher. Thousands of youths were simply

summoned by their local Sandinista draft boards, while many others were captured in house-to-house sweeps, roadblocks, and roundups at public places such as movie theaters, dance halls, and ball parks.

The Sandinistas have been indiscriminate about the age of those they impress, often seizing youths in their mid-teens—below the official draft age. While most of those drafted do enter the army rather than go to jail, thousands of youths have gone into hiding, and many others have slipped across the borders into exile.¹⁴

Many Nicaraguans have protested forced induction into the Sandinista military, which they perceive as the political army of the FSLN party and not the national army of Nicaragua. Also, there is broad resentment over the inadequate training given SMP recruits. Often draftees without adequate military skills are sent to the front to face the forces of the armed opposition. Increasingly, many Nicaraguan parents believe that the Sandinistas are using their children as cannon fodder. As a result of this resentment, spontaneous anti-draft demonstrations have sprung up throughout Nicaragua. For example, for 3 days in September 1984, hundreds of students in Chinandega marched in protest. In December, the residents of Nagarote clashed with Sandinista troops who had come to sweep the town for draft-age youths. Similar acts of protest have occurred in other locations.¹⁵

¹⁴See June Carolyn Erlick's "Draft Dodgers Flee Nicaragua for Honduras," *Miami Herald*, January 4, 1985, p. 12; Steven Kinzer's "Nicaraguan Men Fleeing Draft Fill Honduran Refugee Camp," *New York Times*, April 11, 1985, p. 1; and Edward Cody's "Nicaraguans Choosing Exile to Avoid Draft, Uncertainty," *Washington Post*, April 12, 1985, p. A1.

¹⁵See "Nicaraguan town fights recruiters," *Chicago Tribune*, December 29, 1984, p. 5, and Steven Kinzer's "Town Battles Military Draft in Nicaragua," *New York Times*, January 2, 1985, p. 9.

Implications

The steady pattern of the Sandinista military build-up demonstrates that the FSLN has been intent on forming the largest armed forces in Central America ever since it seized power in 1979. Contrary to Sandinista assertions that their military build-up has been the result of "counterrevolutionary activities" and "foreign aggression," the blueprint for the creation of a powerful combined arms force—infantry, armor, and artillery supported by airpower and naval units—was drawn at least 2 years before significant armed opposition arose.¹⁶ The Sandinistas planned the build-up at a time when the National Guard had been routed, the revolution had broad popular support, and the international community was highly supportive—with the United States leading the efforts to provide economic assistance. While the rise of armed opposition forces has led the Sandinistas to make some adjustments in their plans, such as the formation of special counterinsurgency battalions, it has not significantly affected the basic outline of an oversized military force laid out in 1979–80.

Why did the Sandinistas choose to develop such a huge military establishment? In Nicaragua, as in Cuba and other countries which have fallen to Marxist-Leninist guerrillas, the new regime placed as its top priority the formation of a large armed force which could ensure the consolidation of its power. The Sandinistas recognized that the "honeymoon" period they initially enjoyed would not last. As FSLN National Directorate member Bayardo Arce said in 1984, the Sandinistas never had had any intention of honoring their commitments to pluralism, a mixed economy, and nonalignment; they had merely espoused these policies in 1979 as a tactical ploy.¹⁷ The Sandinistas realized that, as they proceeded with their secret agenda of fostering a Marxist-Leninist regime and exporting revolution throughout the region, they would encounter growing resistance from the nations of the region and from the Nicaraguan people themselves. The Sandinistas sought to develop a powerful military force which could intimidate their neighbors and suppress domestic opposition, thereby providing them with a secure base for their subversive activities.

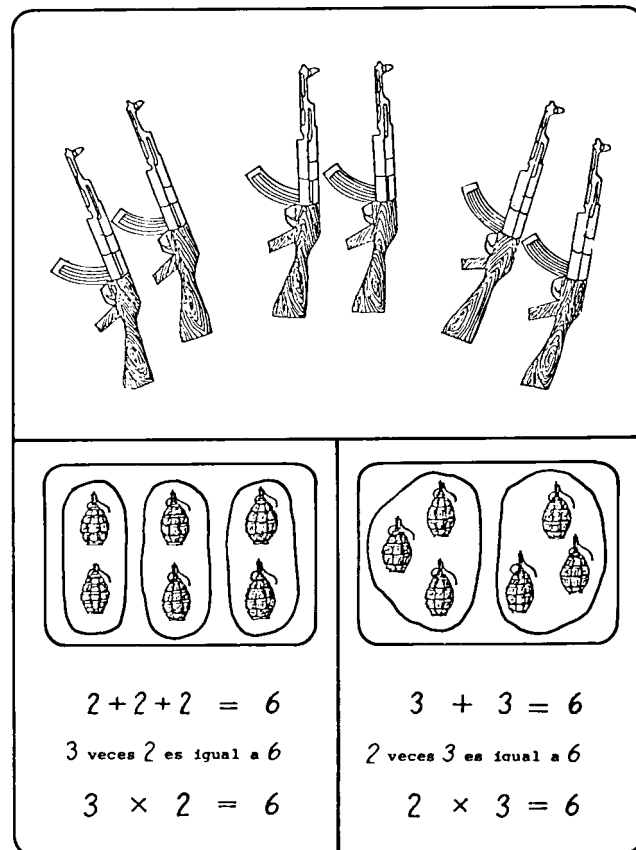
¹⁶Nicaraguan Ambassador Carlos Tunnermann wrote in a letter to the *Washington Post* that prior to November 1981, "there were only a few hundred ex-GN [Somoza's National Guard] soldiers staging sporadic raids on farms along the border. Their principal occupations were cattle-rustling and extortion." See "We Will Never Negotiate With the *Contras*," *Washington Post*, March 30, 1985, p. 21.

¹⁷Joaquim Ibarz, "El Comandante Bayardo Arce afirma que se va a implantar el marxismo-leninismo y el partido unico" ("Comandante Bayardo Arce affirms that they are going to establish Marxism-Leninism and a single party"), *La Vanguardia* (Barcelona, Spain), July 31, 1984. For English translation, see *Comandante Bayardo Arce's Secret Speech before the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN)*, Department of State, March 1985.

Domestic

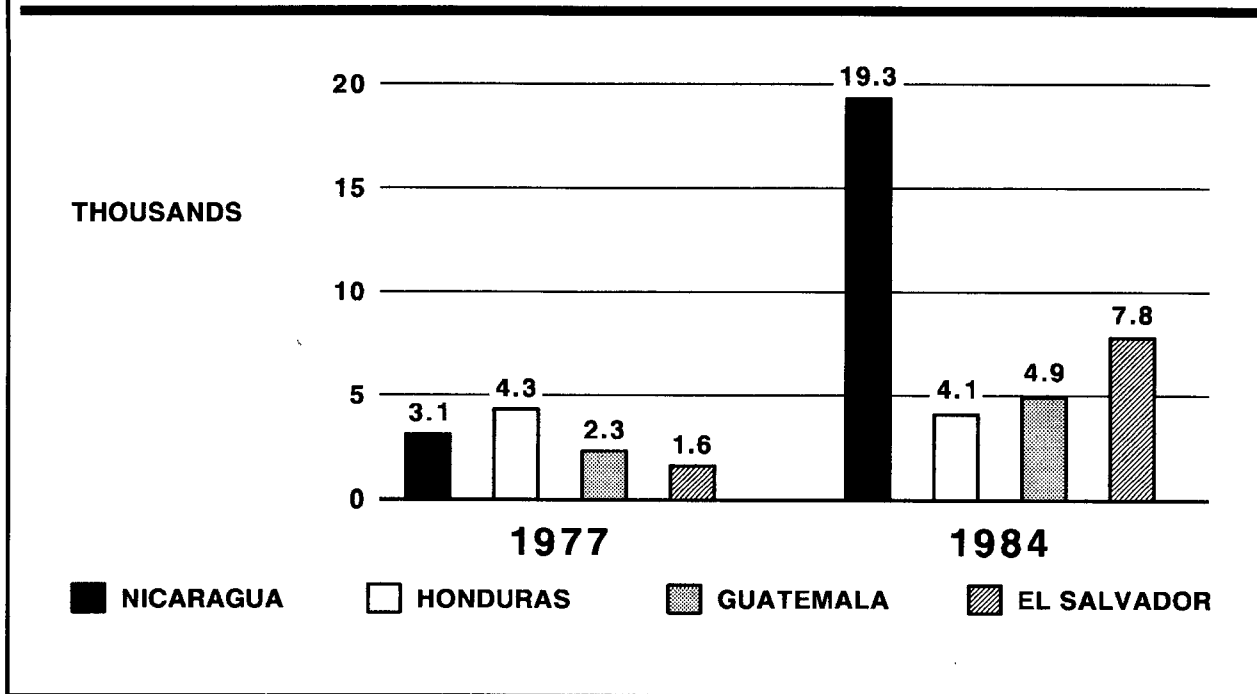
The Sandinistas have militarized Nicaraguan society. Up until 1978, Somoza's National Guard normally had some 7,000 men. It never exceeded 14,000, even at the height of the fighting. The Sandinistas now have a total armed force—regular army, air force, navy, reserves, militia, and security forces—of some 119,000. Nicaragua has a higher percentage of its population on active duty than any other nation in the region. Under the guise of national mobilization, the Sandinistas have drawn nearly 1 out of every 14 Nicaraguans aged 16 and above, including women, into their military/security structure. As noted above, many of the members were recruited through coercion, first by FSLN pressure tactics and since late 1983 by forced conscription.

The Sandinistas have used this militarization to tighten their control over the Nicaraguan people. The military itself is highly politicized; key positions are held by members of the FSLN, and recruits are indoctrinated with Marxist ideology. The concept of state security has become a cloak to protect the dominance of the FSLN. Civil and human rights have been subordinated to the security of the state (read: party), and all those who legitimately challenge Sandinista actions and policies—including politicians, business and labor leaders, church officials, and journalists—are vilified as traitors and counterrevolutionaries. The government, the



Grade-school arithmetic books use pictures of Soviet-made AK-47 rifles and hand grenades to teach children to count.

ARMED FORCES PER 1000 PEOPLE



Nicaragua has a higher percentage of its population on active military duty than any other country in Central America.

armed forces, and the FSLN (including its multitude of associated organizations such as the CDS "block committees") have become parts of the same repressive entity. The Sandinistas' possession of an extensive security network and a large military force equipped with tanks intimidates those who have become disillusioned with the regime and inhibits popular dissent. As this militarization of the society has progressed, the vestiges of political, economic, and social pluralism in Nicaragua have been eroding.

The military build-up has greatly exacerbated Nicaragua's economic crisis. Resources needed for social programs and economic development have been diverted to military purposes. The construction of the Punta Huete airfield, for example, has consumed a large percentage of Nicaragua's total production of cement over the last 2 years. President Daniel Ortega has acknowledged that 40 percent of the 1985 budget is being allocated to the military. Even this figure conceals the true extent of the build-up, however, since much of the arms and ammunition is obtained from the Soviets under long-term credits and therefore do not show up in the budget. Moreover, the mobilization has cut deeply into Nicaragua's work force, taking tens of thousands of people out of the productive sector. The latest harvests of coffee and cotton were reduced significantly because of the shortage of labor, and this will result in a sharp drop in Nicaragua's already reduced foreign exchange earnings.

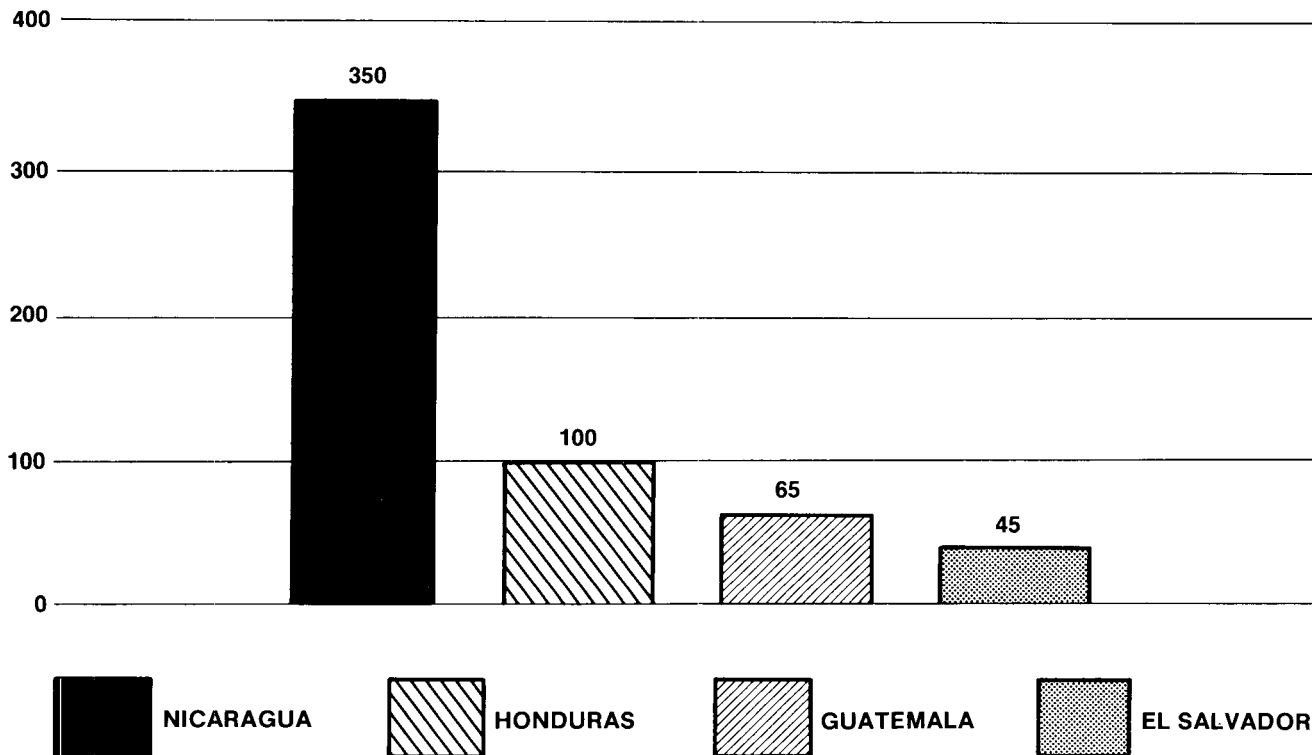
Regional

The flow of arms into Nicaragua since 1979 has provided the Sandinistas with the largest military force in the region. This unilateral build-up has been totally out of proportion to the capabilities of Nicaragua's neighbors. In tanks and armored vehicles, Nicaragua now surpasses all the other countries of Central America combined. This build-up has had a seriously destabilizing effect on the region, and it is creating pressures for a costly arms race.

Costa Rica, Nicaragua's southern neighbor with a population of 2.4 million, has no army. Its 8,000-troop Civil Guard and Rural Guard are essentially constabulary organizations. They do not have heavy equipment such as tanks and artillery, and they could not provide an effective defense against a Sandinista attack.

Honduras, Nicaragua's northern neighbor with a population of 4 million, has a military of about 18,000, less than one-third the size of the Sandinistas' active duty forces. The Honduran army has about 20 regular battalions, of which fewer than 15 are actual maneuver units, compared to the Sandinistas' 34. Honduras has no tanks comparable to the T-55s. It does have a small force of British-made Scorpion armored reconnaissance vehicles, but they are outnumbered more than 2 to 1 by the Sandinistas' PT-76 amphibious tanks alone. Faced with this growing imbalance, in 1984 the Hondurans acquired 72 reconditioned armored cars. They are keenly

TANKS AND ARMORED VEHICLES



Nicaragua has more tanks and armored vehicles than the other four countries of Central America combined.

aware that the Choluteca Gap, which stretches from western Nicaragua into southern Honduras, could provide an avenue of attack for a Sandinista armored thrust into their nation.

Honduras' primary deterrent to a Sandinista attack is its air force. The Honduran air force is considered one of the best in Central America. The Hondurans' defensive plans have rested in large part on the ability of their aircraft to destroy an attacking force and launch retaliatory strikes. Over the past few years, the credibility of this deterrence has steadily eroded as the Sandinistas have developed a nationwide radar system and deployed hundreds of anti-aircraft guns and surface-to-air missiles. The Sandinistas' procurement of jet fighter aircraft would effectively neutralize the Honduran air force, as its aging Super Mysteres would be no match for such jets. Thus, the creation of a Sandinista force of jet fighter aircraft would further skew the balance of military power in Central America and would be dangerously destabilizing for the whole region.¹⁸

The people of Central America perceive that the leftist dictatorship that has developed in Nicaragua now

poses a real as well as a psychological threat. A 1983 Gallup International Poll showed that Nicaragua's growing military strength and support of subversive movements in other countries was a source of concern throughout the region. In Honduras, for example, about 80 percent of the respondents saw Nicaragua as the principal cause of instability and as the primary military threat faced by their country.¹⁹ In early 1985, an affiliate of Gallup released the results of a poll conducted in Costa Rica in which 87 percent of those polled believed that the Sandinistas represented a threat to Costa Rica. In October 1984, the commander of Panama's Defense Force, General Manuel Noriega, said that the Sandinista arms build-up was a danger to the entire region. In reporting Noriega's views, the principal newspaper of San Jose, Costa Rica, *La Nacion*, noted that "Sandinista militarism has to be halted before it produces a holocaust in the entire region."²⁰

Nicaragua's military build-up has complicated the search for peaceful resolution of the crisis in Central America. Because of their military power, the Sandinistas have felt no need to enter into a meaningful

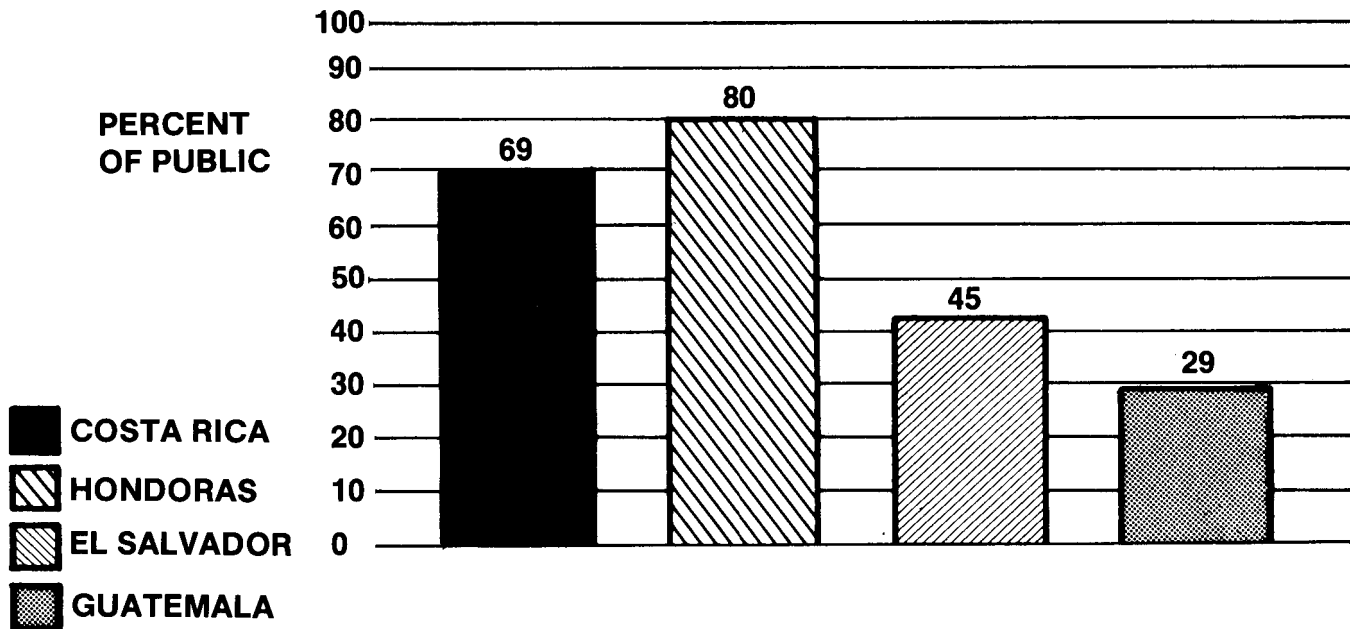
¹⁸The U.S. Government has made clear that the introduction of jet fighter aircraft into Nicaragua would be a serious development which it would view with the utmost concern.

¹⁹For a more complete analysis of this poll, see *La Nacion Internacional* (San Jose, Costa Rica), November 20-24, 1983.

²⁰"Noriega's Statement," *La Nacion* (San Jose, Costa Rica), October 16, 1984, editorial.

IMAGE OF NICARAGUA

PERCENT IN EACH COUNTRY DESCRIBING NICARAGUA AS A MILITARY THREAT



A Gallup International public opinion poll shows that the people in the four other countries of Central America see Nicaragua as a military threat. (The Sandinistas have outlawed public opinion polls in Nicaragua.)

dialogue with their domestic opponents or to negotiate seriously with their neighbors in the Contadora process. Nicaragua's military strength, coupled with its willingness to use subversion and terror, makes it an extremely formidable adversary in Central America and serves to intimidate the other nations in the region.²¹ The National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, chaired by Dr. Henry Kissinger, noted:

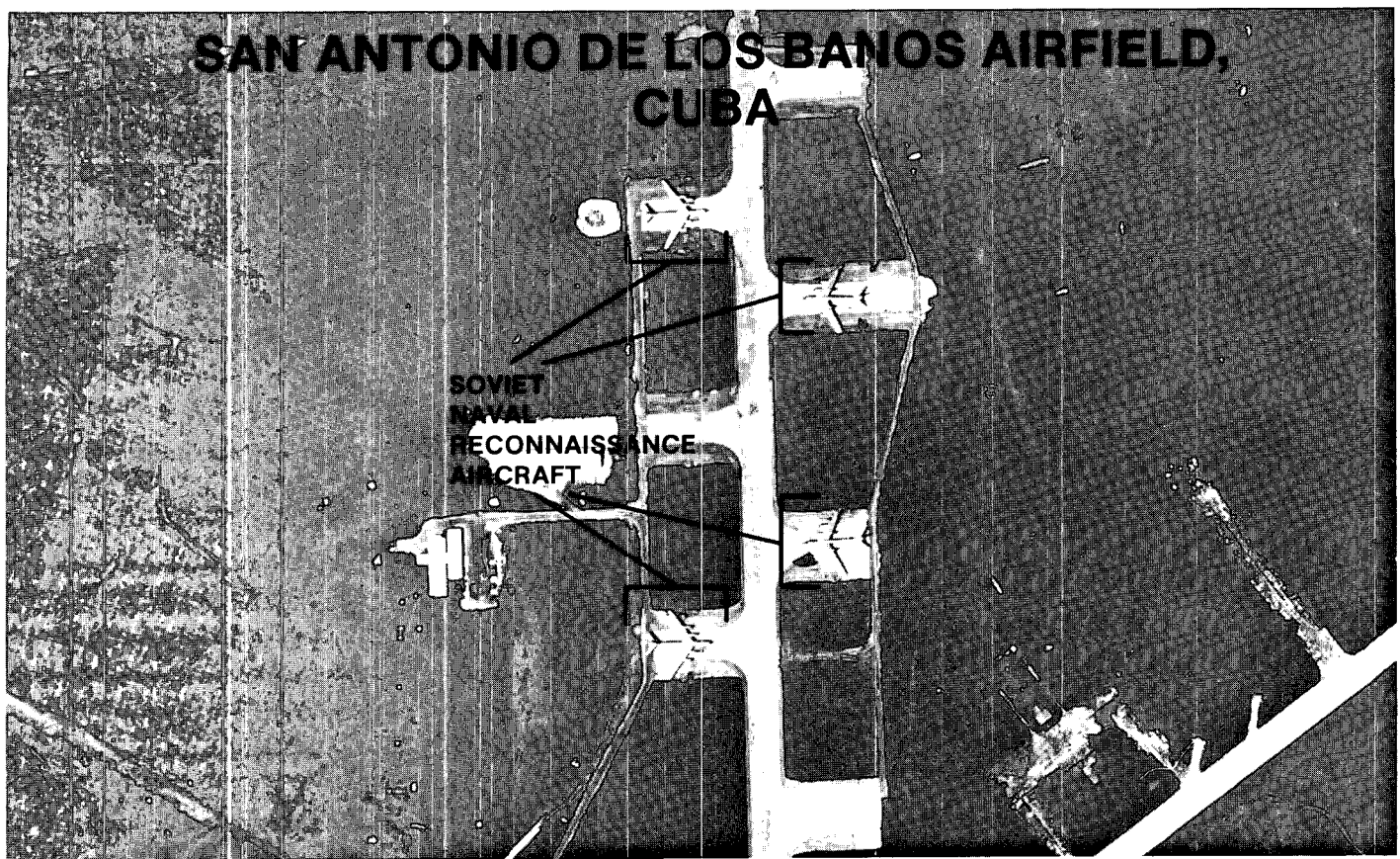
... the existence of a political order on the Cuban model in Nicaragua would pose major difficulties in negotiating, implementing, and verifying any Sandinista commitment to refrain from supporting insurgency and subversion in other countries.²²

²¹Eduardo Ulibari, director and editor of Costa Rica's largest daily newspaper, *La Nacion*, referred to the impact of Nicaragua's military buildup on the other nations of Central America in his article "Costa Rica and Honduras Find Washington an Unreliable Ally," *Wall Street Journal*, January 25, 1985, p. 21. Ulibari concluded that, absent strong support from the United States, a likely consequence of the growing power of the Sandinistas would be the "Finlandization" of Costa Rica and the militarization of Honduras. He added that "faced with an enemy as formidable as Soviet-backed Nicaragua, Honduras has no choice but to follow a pragmatic course of appeasement with a totalitarian government it profoundly mistrusts."

²²Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, January 1984, p. 114.

Strategic

Consolidation of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua is a serious concern to the United States, for the Soviet Union can and does use Nicaragua to carry out Soviet policies in Central America. In return for their investment of about a half-billion dollars in military aid—and hundreds of millions of dollars more of economic aid—the Soviets have obtained an additional center of influence in a region which, because of its proximity to both the U.S. mainland and the Panama Canal, is vital to the United States. Moreover, they could gain for the first time a beachhead on the American Continent. Cuba has served as Moscow's surrogate in Nicaragua; the approximately 7,500 Cubans there, including some 3,000 military/security advisers, are helping the Sandinistas consolidate a regime closely aligned to the Soviet bloc without arousing the alarm that the presence of a similar number of Soviet personnel would create. As the Soviets seek to foment further instability and revolution in Central America, they now have a willing accomplice in Sandinista-controlled Nicaragua. The growing crisis in Central America compels the United States to shift attention and assets from other critical areas of the world. To the extent that the Soviets succeed in tying down the



Soviet reconnaissance aircraft operate out of Cuba to fly missions along the Atlantic Coast of the United States. Nicaragua's Punta Huete runway is long enough to accommodate this type of aircraft, giving the Soviets a potential facility for reconnaissance flights along the Pacific Coast of the United States.

United States in Central America, they hope to gain greater freedom of action elsewhere.

The presence in Central America of a nation tied closely to the Soviet Union poses concrete military problems for the United States. Nicaragua has the potential for becoming a center for Soviet military and intelligence activities, as has Cuba. As noted above, the Soviets have already supplied the Sandinistas with four communications intercept facilities. When completed, the runway at Punta Huete will be able to accommodate any Soviet military aircraft. Soviet reconnaissance planes flying out of Punta Huete would be able to fly missions along the U.S. Pacific Coast, just as they now reconnoiter the U.S. Atlantic Coast from Cuba. Soviet ships, including surface warships, submarines, and spy ships, could use Nicaragua's Pacific ports, such as Corinto, just as they now use Cuban ports when operating in the Caribbean. The very potential for the Soviet military use of Nicaragua complicates U.S. defense planning, for in a crisis situation the United States would be compelled to divert resources to counter such possibilities.

Postscript

To promote lasting peace, economic development, and democracy in Central America, the United States policy toward Nicaragua has four objectives:

- (1) Severance of Nicaraguan military and security ties to Cuba and the Soviet bloc;
- (2) Reduction of Nicaragua's military strength to levels that would restore military equilibrium in the area;
- (3) An end to Nicaraguan support for guerrilla groups in neighboring countries; and,
- (4) Fulfillment of original Sandinista promises to support democratic pluralism and to respect human and civil rights.

Only when Nicaragua frees itself of its military ties to Communist states, reduces the size of its military to levels commensurate with its legitimate defense needs, ceases to subvert its neighbors, and allows genuine democracy and national reconciliation for its people can peace prosper in the region. These same objectives are reflected in the 21 principles adopted in September 1983 by the participants in the Contadora process, including Nicaragua. The United States has consistently made its position clear in frequent meetings with the Nicaraguan Government, and it has worked for the achievement of these objectives both directly in its bilateral discussions with Nicaragua and by supporting the regional peace process.

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