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REAGAN TO ACCUSE SOVIET OF SENDING ARMS TO MANAGUA

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WASHINGTON, June 7 — White House officials said today that President Reagan, in a campaign to try to win Congressional approval of new aid for Nicaraguan rebels, would charge this week that the Soviet Union has resumed direct arms shipments to Managua.

The officials said United States intelligence sources had information showing that a Soviet freighter delivered a large cache of military supplies to Nicaragua in early May.

Attempts to reach the spokesman at the Nicaraguan Embassy in Washington were unavailing. The spokesman was in Nicaragua, according to the person who answered the phone, and no one else could respond.

Speculation on Purpose

The White House officials speculated that the reported shipment of hardware was intended to help Managua mount a new drive against the United States-backed guerrillas seeking to overthrow the Sandinista Government.

Mr. Reagan is hoping to win approval by the House of Representatives for \$100 million in aid to the rebels, known as contras. He is expected to lobby heavily over the next two weeks, before the scheduled House vote on the package. The President is seeking \$70 million in military aid and about \$30 million for nonmilitary purposes.

The White House officials said the Soviet arms shipment they described was one of several key developments since March, when the House rejected Mr. Reagan's aid request, that would strengthen the White House case this time.

Increased Repression Charged

They said Mr. Reagan is expected to assert that the Nicaraguan Government increased repression in recent months, including a new crackdown on the political opposition, and that Nicaragua has actively sought to thwart regional efforts to negotiate a peace.

The new Administration assertion about Soviet arms was made by a senior White House official and later repeated by another Reagan aide who said he had seen intelligence reports supporting the assertion. The officials said they were unable to provide documentary evidence because of sensitivity over how the information was obtained.

Administration officials have been reluctant to discuss Soviet arms deliveries to Nicaragua since they were embarrassed by assertions in November 1984 that Moscow might be supplying MIG-21 fighter planes to Managua. The assertions came after a United States surveillance satellite passing over a Soviet port observed 12 crates of the

kind that usually contain MIG's next to a Soviet freighter, the Bakuriani.

United States intelligence analysts later concluded that there had probably not been any fighter planes aboard the Bakuriani when it was unloaded at the Nicaraguan port of Corinto, although some White House officials suggested that the planes might have been stowed below deck and not unloaded because of the sharp protests by Washington to Moscow.

According to the officials, the new arms shipment was the first time in more than 18 months that the Soviet Union supplied military equipment directly to Nicaragua. The Administration has previously said Soviet deliveries normally go first to the Cuban port of Mariel and are off-loaded before going on to Nicaragua.

The officials said the latest shipment, from the Soviet Black Sea port of Nikolayev, arrived in Nicaragua in early May. They would not identify the type of arms, but said this information might be divulged later this week, presumably by Mr. Reagan.

"The significance of this is that the Sandinistas want to wipe out the contras during 1986, and they want to have all the equipment they need to be able to wipe them out," said one senior White House official. "Because they are so determined to make a big push, they have decided to be less cautious, perhaps."

Report on Soviet Personnel

In April 1985, before the House and Senate were scheduled to vote on a request for \$14 million in aid to the rebels, Mr. Reagan contended that Soviet "military personnel" had been spotted in the battle zones in northern Nicaragua near the Honduran border.

Discussing the reported arms shipment today, the officials speculated that the Sandinistas probably received the shipment believing it would have no bearing on the United States Congressional debate over the rebel aid, since the Russians have consistently supplied Managua with arms.

"They never think we are going to know about these things," added another White House official.

A third official recalled the visit to the Soviet Union last year by President Daniel Ortega Saavedra of Nicaragua. The visit, which came just before a Congressional vote, caused some legislators to change their minds on a request for aid to the rebels, and the request was approved.

Another Pre-Vote Report

This March, just as Congress was considering the new aid request, the Administration asserted that the Sandinistas had launched a major invasion into neighboring Honduras to destroy contra bases. The size and nature of the invasion has been disputed by Nicaraguan and some Honduran sources.

The officials said that since the House rejected the latest aid request by a 222-to-210 vote in March, the Sandinistas had increased internal repression, using a new tactic of charging political opponents of the Government with criminal offenses.

The officials said the Nicaraguan Government had also intensified efforts to confiscate private businesses, forcing thousands of small shops to either shut down or come under state control in the past three months. The officials also said the Sandinistas had carried out an unprovoked attack on Miskito Indian villages in March that forced about 11,000 villagers to flee into Honduras.

In other developments since March, the officials said foreign military advisers, who, according to United States estimates, number about 3,500 to 5,000 Cubans and 250 Russians, are taking on more support roles such as manning radar, conducting reconnaissance flights and flying helicopters.

Publicizing Reports

The officials said the White House is considering the best method for Mr. Reagan to publicize these developments.

The officials asserted that the contras, since March, had been able to nearly double their troop strength inside Nicaragua to about 10,000 to 12,000.

"It has been a good month for them," said one White House official. "They have decided to use what they have left to mount a major campaign. But the problem is that the supplies are already dwindling in certain categories, and without new aid there is no way they can continue such a campaign past sometime in July."

Other White House aides said Nicaragua's participation in the peace talks by the so-called Contadora nations — Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama — should also help the United States case because of the delay in reaching an agreement. The Administration has asserted that Nicaragua's neighbors have become united in dismay at Nicaragua's policies during the talks and that the two sides are further apart now than ever.