

Washington's undeclared war

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According to Judson, some elements within the Reagan administration are conducting a propaganda campaign attempting to create public support for more direct intervention in Central America.

As Judson says, "Only popular protest and solidarity based on information can stop U.S. intervention."

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Revolutionary Nicaragua is currently experiencing the most intense chapter in the continuing U.S. effort to destabilize, overthrow and reverse the 1979 Revolution.

The Western news media are full of stories about Nicaragua's imports of weaponry from socialist countries.

Last week, the U.S. government claimed that Soviet MiG 21s were on board a Soviet freighter bound for the Pacific Coast port of Corinto. More recently the U.S. State Department admits that it has no confirmation and now suspects that the weaponry unloaded in Corinto was helicopters and surface-to-air missiles.

But the same statements to the effect that imports of weapons from the socialist countries constitute a "Soviet build-up" and a direct threat to U.S. strategic interests in the Caribbean region continue to be issued by U.S. spokespersons.

The furor over the deliveries of defensive military equipment to the Sandinista revolutionary government in Nicaragua has been complemented by specific U.S. military actions.

The already-present patrols of U.S. naval vessels probing spurs very close to Nicaragua's coast by speed boats based on U.S. "mother ships" and overflights of Nicaraguan territory by radar-specialized aircraft have been stepped up, as reported, among others by the *Globe and Mail's* correspondent Oak-

land Ross.

A recent addition to these unsettling provocations is the use of high-altitude, super-sonic aircraft to produce sonic booms over the capital city of Managua. A further element in the threat package is a series of statements from Washington regarding a possible "quarantine" of Nicaragua.

The pattern of U.S. actions has reminded not a few Latin Americans and many students of post-1945 U.S. interventions in the region of the U.S. buildups before the CIA-engineered overthrow of the Arbenz regime in Guatemala in 1954 and the attempted invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961.

None of these maneuvers by the U.S. is unprecedented. The record of the U.S. political, ideological, economic and military offensive against the Nicaraguan revolution in the last five years is amply documented and widely known.

What, then, is the significance of this most recent collection of threats, provocations and actions? The answer is to be found in separating the elements of the present conjuncture.

First, the U.S.-backed *contras* have simply failed in their assigned revolutionary task. They have been unable to take and hold even the smallest villages in Nicaragua and have been defeated on the field of battle whenever forced to stand and fight.

Their morale is not known to be of very high quality, which is to be expected in a mercenary force. Many of their encounters have been with peasant militia in the northern areas of Nicaragua, and they have had to resort to terror, kidnapping and torture as tactics.

Their targets are economic and political rather than military. Thus rape victims, such as the Miskito leader and medical worker Dr. Myrna Cunningham, who recently visited Canada and the U.S., are the result.

More recently, the *contras* kidnapped Sandinista candidates for political office (the election was November 4) in the Atlantic Coast area, hoping to disrupt the electoral process.

In general, the *contras* have tried to create a climate of terror among the population along the Costa Rica and Honduran borders by killing teachers, tech-

nicians, health workers, agrarian cooperative leaders and Sandinista officials and by destroying schools, hospitals, health clinics, people's stores, warehouses and road-building equipment.

Among those killed have been two European doctors, specifically sought out and shot summarily.

Busloads full of peasants have been stopped, the women raped and the men sprayed with machine gun fire. These actions have not helped the U.S. in its propaganda campaign to depict the *contras* as "freedom fighters."

Second, the Honduran army and political elite have not fulfilled the assigned role as U.S. proxy. The Sandinistas have refused to be provoked by Honduran army collaboration with the *contras*, even when Honduran army units have shelled Nicaragua and accompanied the *contras* on raids.

But beyond this, the militarization of Honduras has created a backlash against the U.S. intervention from unions, civic organizations, the Catholic Church and political figures. Disagreement with U.S. policies extends into the Honduran military and many have been responsible for the replacement of "strongman" General Alvarez earlier this year.

The general was the man that *Newsweek* and *Time* claimed was taking orders from the U.S. ambassador in Tegucigalpa, John Negroponete.

Despite the attempt by the U.S., its large CIA contingent in Honduras and hardline elements in the Honduran military to create war fever in Honduras, most informed sources say that the majority of Hondurans have no interest in a war with Nicaragua.

Many recall the 1969 war with El Salvador's army and wonder whether that force is more destabilizing in the region.

Third, the U.S. has been stung in the last year with a series of revelations about its "dirty tricks" against Nicaragua. A year ago, after the failure of the large-scale *contra* invasions to establish a piece of territory which could then receive recognition from Washington, the CIA turned to massive sabotage of the Nicaragua economy.

