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Panamanian Congressman Denounces Training Of Nicaraguan Contras By U.S. Southern Command In Canal Zone

by Deborah Tyroler

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According to Panamanian congressperson Luis Navas, Nicaraguan contras are being trained on the banks of the Panama Canal in Colon province. In a Sept. 26 interview with the Cuban government's international news service, PRENSA LATINA, Navas said, "We know the Southern Command is training several counter-revolutionary contingents at Fort Sherman." The congressman is a member of the ruling Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) from Colon province. Navas stated that the contras have been training for some three months in jungle fighting, and in handling modern weapons supplied by the US government. He added that the topography of Fort Sherman, located at the Canal's Atlantic outlet, is similar to that of Nicaragua's Atlantic coastal region. According to the politician, residents of Colon province can corroborate his statements. Residents have encountered contra trainees near the Fort "many times and have even reprimanded them for disrespecting local women." Navas said the presence of Nicaraguan contras violates the Canal treaties which specify that the Southern Command can train regular forces of other nations, but not irregular troops engaged in fighting against a nation with an internationally recognized government and which maintains diplomatic relations with Panama.

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