Arms and Politics in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, 1948-1981

Stephen Earley
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Introduction

From the time the Sandinistas seized the National Palace in August 1978 until their victory on July 19, 1979, the Nicaraguan Revolution has brought worldwide attention to Central America that has yet to diminish. The recent events in El Salvador, exacerbated by apparent interference from the young and struggling Sandinista government, as well as a growing awareness by the outside world of the internal agitation in Guatemala, have maintained that attention. Honduras regularly goes through its own political convulsions, and not long ago, Panama was an issue of national controversy in the United States during talks on the canal treaties. But tiny Costa Rica--that "ideal democracy" in the midst of Central American military chaos--has received little outside recognition of the internal problems and conflicts that signal departures from its admirable traditions. Faced with an economic crisis unparalleled in its history, shocked during the spring of 1981 by a series of terrorist attacks once thought "impossible" in such a tranquil country, and still trying to understand its leaders' involvement in the Nicaraguan Revolution, Costa Rica demands our scrutiny.

The intent of this paper is to demonstrate Costa Rica's involvement in the Nicaraguan Revolution as the culmination of an historical process set into motion some thirty years before. The nature of that
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Introduction

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The intent of this paper is to demonstrate Costa Rica's involvement in the Nicaraguan Revolution as the culmination of an historical process set into motion some thirty years before. The nature of that
involvement—as a conduit for arms to several of the world's "hot spots"—also needs to be examined and discussed. In addition, this study will cover events surrounding the transfer of armaments through Costa Rica before, during, and after the Nicaraguan Revolution. It will also document the results of Costa Rica's Legislative Assembly Special Commission that investigated the movement of arms.

All these issues are important in understanding the changes going on inside Costa Rica today. Such an examination also helps to explain the daily turmoil in Central America. Finally, such a study provides an indication of what may lie ahead for both Costa Rica and the Central American region as a whole.

Costa Rica and Nicaragua: Conflict and Contrast

To understand Costa Rica's role in the Nicaraguan Revolution, both its historical process in relation to Nicaragua and its internal workings as a nation need to be examined briefly. In many respects, Costa Rica and Nicaragua could not have differed more during the forty years prior to the Nicaraguan conflict. Although both have been typical examples of Latin American countries that export primary goods (cotton, coffee, and bananas) in exchange for industrial products, their respective social and political structures have contrasted remarkably.

Nicaragua is a nation characterized by natural geographic barriers, dispersed population, and social and ethnic stratification.\(^1\) Over the years, social cleavages developed and internal differences erupted into rebellions or spurred the growth of guerrilla movements, inhibiting attempts to create a more stable, democratic governing process. Anastasio Somoza García's seizure of power in 1936 militarized the National Guard,
which eventually repressed the Nicaraguan people as brutally as any Latin American regime to the present day.\(^2\) The Sandinistas' rise to prominence in the 1970s was a response to the increasing viciousness of the Somoza regime.

Costa Rica's history, on the other hand, shows a different social and political development. Over the centuries, the majority of its population settled on the Meseta Central (central plateau), inland from the two oceans. This settlement, however, did not begin until the 1800s, with the arrival of small landowning farmers, unaccompanied by enslaved blacks or Indians. As a result, social differences tended to be inconspicuous,\(^3\) which allowed a less tumultuous and more positive political evolution.\(^4\) Since the 1930s, Costa Rica's democratic procedure has been noticeably abused only once. The resulting successful revolution in 1948, led by the flamboyant José (Don Pepe) Figueres, actually served to strengthen and broaden the democratic process.\(^5\) In addition, the new constitution replaced the military with a civilian police force.\(^6\) In contrast to the vigorous censorship under Somoza, Costa Rican press and radio traditionally have been free to attack whichever political party is in office.

Furthermore, Costa Rica has taken pride in a more egalitarian socio-economic development,\(^7\) including a strong emphasis on education and literacy. For instance, the Costa Rican constitution requires compulsory attendance in primary school and state support for education, in contrast with the Nicaraguan constitution, which never clearly states whether education is mandatory or state-supported.\(^8\)

Border disturbances, disputes over waterway rights, and squabbles concerning tuna fishing areas have been common between Costa Rica and Nicaragua throughout their existence as neighbors.\(^9\) Such problems have
been relatively minor, however; and even with the social, economic, and political differences noted above, they are not sufficient to explain Costa Rica's deep involvement in the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1978-79. To complete the picture, one needs to go back to the 1940s and the aspirations of the Costa Rican leader José Figueres.

Born in 1906, Figueres acquired his education in both Costa Rica and the United States. In 1928, he settled down on his farm, La Lucha, to cultivate cabuya (sisal used in making rope). His continued reading of political and philosophical works, later coupled with a growing dissatisfaction with the presidency of Rafael Angel Calderón, led Figueres increasingly to express his political views in public. In July 1942, government officials interrupted Figueres midway through an impassioned radio address attacking the Calderón administration and its policies. He was arrested, taken to jail, and quickly exiled on questionable grounds. His two years of exile, spent mostly in Mexico, served to increase Don Pepe's prestige in Costa Rica and allowed him to develop his political ideology. It also gave him time to pursue plans to oust the Calderonistas, whom he regarded as a threat to Costa Rican democracy. In Mexico, Figueres made contacts with political exiles of other Central American countries, which led him to recognize the need for a joint effort to remove all Central American dictators, including Calderón. Studying armaments and warfare strategies, he prepared himself for this endeavor.10

In 1944, Don Pepe returned to a popular reception in Costa Rica, where Calderón's choice, Teodoro Picado, was now President. From his farm at La Lucha, Figueres dabbled in the politics of various opposition parties, but also kept his hand (and some money) in conspiratorial matters.
This involvement led him to sign an agreement, the Caribbean Pact, in 1947 with Central American revolutionaries. In the accord, he promised to work with all group attempts against dictatorial regimes in Central America. A year later this group became known as the Caribbean Legion, and its actions stimulated Central American and Caribbean guerrilla movements throughout the next decade.\(^{11}\)

In February 1948, election irregularities provoked a civil war in Costa Rica, and Figueres assumed a leading role in the ensuing rebellion. With the aid of the newly-formed Caribbean Legion, he and his companions won the brief forty-day revolution. With Don Pepe at its head, a provisional junta ruled for the next eighteen months and drafted a constitution that restored the original democratic system.\(^{12}\)

The 1948 Revolution, however, produced a new element in Costa Rican politics--an increasing antagonism between José Figueres and the Somoza family of Nicaragua--that plagued the two nations for the next thirty years. The Somoza regime had been founded by the intelligent and ambitious Anastasio Somoza García. In 1932, by conniving with influential Nicaraguans and meddling U.S. officials, Somoza managed to be appointed chief of the National Guard. Bolstered by the guard's strength and efficiency, he took control of the Nicaraguan political scene in 1936. In the 1940s, he became a prime target for social-democratic guerrilla groups, especially the Caribbean Legion.\(^{13}\)

Subsequently, members of the Nicaraguan National Guard were accused of fighting alongside the Calderonista forces during Costa Rica's 1948 Revolution. Later that year, Somoza responded to Caribbean Legion activities coordinated in Costa Rica by aiding a Calderón invasion into northwestern Costa Rica. This action prompted Figueres to appeal to the Organization of
American States. Delegates from the OAS arrived several days later to examine the situation. Their study resulted in an OAS reprimand of both countries and the placement of OAS surveillance teams at the Nicaragua-Costa Rica border. Tensions cooled, and the surveillance teams left after two months.14

Relations between the two nations remained calm until early 1954, when Costa Rican authorities discovered weapons in two areas of the country. Several men were detained, at least one of whom had fought with Don Pepe and the Caribbean Legion during the 1948 Rebellion. The following day, however, the Legislative Assembly defeated a proposed bill to expel arms traffickers from Costa Rica. Less than three months later, Nicaraguan authorities arrested twenty-two persons involved in a plot to assassinate Anastasio Somoza. Among those captured were several Caribbean Pact members. Somoza charged, correctly, that Figueres had supported the attempt, and relations between the two countries deteriorated further.15

On January 11, 1955, another Somoza-backed Calderonista invasion of Costa Rica took place. Days later their planes strafed several Costa Rican cities, causing Figueres, now President of Costa Rica, to appeal again to the OAS. Within hours, four U.S. fighter jets intervened and brought the situation under control.16

A year and a half later, the Nicaraguan rule altered significantly when a young poet assassinated dictator Somoza García. His two sons immediately inherited the regime with Luís becoming President and Anastasio, Jr., the head of the National Guard. Under Luís, freedom of the press increased and a more moderate political atmosphere prevailed. However, the antipathy between Nicaragua and Costa Rica continued. In May 1957,
Costa Rican authorities uncovered a plot to assassinate President Figueres. They arrested three Cubans, who implicated Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Trujillo, as well as Luis and Anastasio Somoza.17

Meanwhile, the illicit Central American weapons trade continued. In mid-September 1957, Honduran officials accused former Costa Rican war veteran Frank Marshall Jiménez of transporting arms through Honduras. The accusations led to an investigation by Costa Rica's Legislative Assembly during which Marshall implicated many influential people in the National Liberation Party (PLN),18 the nation's most prominent political group. But despite the length of the scandal and assertions by the investigating committee that a "sensational" report was forthcoming, no report was ever released.19

At this time, Fidel Castro and his men were making headlines with their guerrilla forays out of the Sierra Maestra mountains in eastern Cuba. Not surprisingly, many Costa Ricans supported Castro's efforts to overthrow Cuba's dictator, Fulgencio Batista. Don Pepe himself worked with Castro through an intermediary in Mexico,20 and the Caribbean Legion continued to be a factor in the region's unrest.

As the turbulent fifties came to a close, the antagonisms between Nicaragua and Costa Rica flared up again. In mid-1959, 110 rebels (formerly based at Punta Llorona on the Pacific side of Costa Rica) supported by Don Pepe invaded Nicaragua. Because of bad timing, hurried planning, and various mishaps, however, the attack failed within two weeks. Among the Costa Ricans implicated in the invasion were several PLN members, Frank Marshall, and Figueres. In 1960 yet another revolutionary force launched an abortive effort to oust Somoza from Costa Rican territory. But this time the Costa Rican Civil Guard acted as effectively as the Nicaraguan
National Guard in ending the attempt, a clear change in government policy toward such matters. Costa Rica's days as a staging area for exporting revolutions seemed to be over.21

The next half dozen years were quieter for Central America. Then, in April 1967, Luís Somoza died unexpectedly. This allowed his West Point-educated brother, Anastasio, to assume full control of Nicaragua. His leadership brought a more rightist and militant perspective to the government.22

The early 1970s, with José Figueres once again Costa Rica's President, were a time of ambivalent relations between the Nicaraguan and Costa Rican governments. The 1972 earthquake in Nicaragua's capital, Managua, brought considerable aid from its southern neighbor. Such assistance was unfortunately marred by the corrupt behavior of Nicaraguan authorities. In spite of the tense relations, however, Figueres and Somoza did meet on several occasions to discuss Central American affairs, including the clarification of territorial boundaries.23

Then in October 1977, border clashes between the growing Sandinista guerrilla force and the Nicaraguan National Guard resulted in Costa Rica's closing its northern border. Three days later, Costa Rica's El Excélsior reported that the Nicaraguan National Guard was occupying a three-kilometer strip inside the Costa Rican border. The following month, Somoza accused Costa Rica of neglecting to patrol its border and thereby allowing guerrilla activity in Costa Rican territory.24

On January 10, 1978, prominent Nicaraguan editor and opposition political spokesman Pedro Juáquín Chamorro was assassinated. Suspecting government involvement in the killing, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and other opposition groups redoubled their efforts to rid
Nicaragua of Somoza. In late January, a general strike crippled the nation. In February, fighting broke out between the National Guard and "civilian bands" in Masaya. Assassinations of several prominent figures at both ends of the political spectrum took place in the ensuing months, and the murder of five students in Jinotepe on July 9 set off riots throughout the country. 25

Then, on August 22, a group of two dozen young Sandinistas led by Eden Pastora (Comandante Cero) electrified the world with a dramatic seizure of Nicaragua's National Palace. For two days, they held more than five hundred government employees hostage, including the entire Congress. During the siege, they forced Somoza to release fifty-eight political prisoners, obtained five hundred thousand dollars, and received safe conduct out of Nicaragua to Panama. What made this event especially interesting, particularly for Costa Ricans, was the subsequent revelation that many of the guns Pastora used in that daring exploit were provided by José Figueres, from his 1948 arsenal on La Lucha. The aging former President was still nurturing some of the revolutionary schemes of his younger days. 26

Costa Rica and the Nicaraguan Revolution

By the early 1970s, Eden Pastora's guerrilla activities in Nicaragua had forced him to flee to Costa Rica, where he lived with his family and operated a power plant in the Atlantic port of Barra del Colorado. But the events of 1978 brought the Panamanian-born Pastora back into action. After making contact with Figueres, Pastora and his youthful band cleaned out what was left of Don Pepe's cache of 1948 weapons and headed for Nicaragua. 27
Figueres acted on his own as one revolutionary helping another. His actions, however, were not known to the public until May of 1981. At that time, Pastora and Figueres each spoke about the latter's assistance. Although their accounts differed,28 Don Pepe's complicity was clear; when Pastora approached him for guns in mid-1978, he decided that the FSLN was capable of overthrowing his long-time adversary and was therefore deserving of his support.29

Following the successful seizure of the National Palace, the fighting intensified in Nicaragua. On September 7, 1978, the FSLN coordinated attacks on almost every major city in Nicaragua, and on September 13, Somoza declared martial law. On September 12, however, a much more serious event had occurred for Costa Ricans when Nicaraguan Air Force planes strafed La Cruz, a town inside the border of Costa Rica, wounding several students and teachers. This incident was to be the first of numerous Nicaraguan Air Force and National Guard incursions during the next ten months. The following day, Panama and Venezuela sent several warplanes and helicopters to Costa Rica. Two days later, Costa Rica signed a mutual-assistance agreement with Venezuela.30

Soon after, Somoza charged that the Sandinistas were using Costa Rican territory as a "neutral rear guard." He continued throughout the war to insist that the FSLN took advantage of Costa Rican inability to control its border area. Eventually he claimed that Costa Rica willingly protected the FSLN guerrillas. Newspapers in San José answered with private advertisements in support of the Sandinistas. Newspapers and radio broadcasts also carried periodic denunciations of Somoza, his regime, and the atrocities committed by his army.31
In addition, the September 12 air attack prompted a protest from Costa Rica to the OAS, and two weeks later, Costa Rica's President Rodrigo Carazo Odio condemned Somoza before the United Nations. However, the slow response of the OAS, as well as its assertions that Costa Rica could not control its borders, drew heated warnings from both Carazo and Public Security Minister Juan José Echevarría Brealey that they were considering withdrawal from an "ineffective" OAS. Carazo further pointed out that such countries as the United States, and a few in Asia, could not completely control their borders. Nonetheless, he and Minister Echevarría insisted that efforts were being made to control their northern borders and that many Sandinistas had already been arrested and deported to Panama. They both denied any support of the FSLN, citing border clean-up operations by the Costa Rican Civil Guard. Such clean-up efforts occurred frequently throughout the war, which might explain their basic ineffectiveness.32

President Carazo and Minister Echevarría were to be the principal policy framers for the Costa Rican government during and after the Nicaraguan Revolution. Both had broken with Figueres and the PLN during the 1970 election campaign, and later created their own political party called the Popular Unity Party (PUP). In 1974 Carazo lost his initial presidential bid, but in 1978, he defeated PLN candidate Luís Alberto Monge Alvarez. He then named José Echevarría, his campaign manager, to the dual position of Minister of Public Security and Minister of the Interior. A former U.S. military academy student in his mid-thirties, Echevarría became Carazo's right-hand man during the Nicaraguan conflict.33

October brought a reduction in border tensions, but no cease-fire within Nicaragua. Official government statements and radio broadcasts from both Costa Rica and Nicaragua continued to exchange charges and
counter-charges. Minister Echevarría reportedly purchased some U.S. patrol boats, but denied buying any weapons for the country. In addition, after assuring Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans alike that no Sandinista guerrilla camps existed inside the country's border area, he requested that Eden Pastora leave Costa Rica. 34

Events in November, however, became more serious when border violations increased, and on November 15, two Nicaraguan helicopters landed near Los Chiles in northern Costa Rica. Security Minister Echevarría consequently discussed the possibility of buying arms from Israel, and the next day, he announced that Costa Rican officials would consider purchasing two U.S. helicopters. In conjunction with the latter plan, the Security Department acknowledged that a group of officials had already been sent to Panama for training in helicopter operation and maintenance. 35

Then on November 21, 1978, Nicaraguan National Guardsmen fired upon several Costa Rican Civil Guards on border patrol, killing two and taking the third prisoner. Costa Ricans erupted in outrage. The Costa Rican government immediately broke diplomatic relations with Nicaragua, and a week later, volunteer military training began across the nation. The media stepped up their denunciations of Somoza, and President Carazo's protests to the OAS brought officials to investigate four days later. 36

As December began, Somoza took steps to alleviate the worsening situation in Nicaragua. On December 7, he agreed to end martial law and offered complete amnesty to the guerrillas. Five days later, he released fifty-seven political prisoners. But such belated measures were to no avail; the growing opposition ignored his overtures of peace and hardened its position. 37
Meanwhile, reporter José Juaquín Loria of Costa Rica's Prensa Libre caused a sensation by publishing a rumor that five thousand mercenaries—primarily Venezuelans and Panamanians—were entering Nicaragua near Peñas Blancas in northwestern Costa Rica. In the early hours of the next morning, President Carazo had Loria "drafted" into the public police force and placed in the hands of two Civil Guardsmen. Carazo and a group of officials and reporters then accompanied Loria to the border so that he could indicate where guerrilla camps supposedly were located. No camps could be found, but Carazo's intimidation of Loria incurred severe editorial criticism from the newspapers. Cries of "over-reaction" and "highhandedness" mingled with charges of constitutional violations.

While fighting continued in Nicaragua, and intermittent National Guard and Air Force violations were reported on Costa Rica's northern border, the OAS finished its investigation concerning the November 21 border attack. The OAS representatives visited both sides of the border, but their findings were anything but pleasing to Costa Rica because the OAS declared that neither side had been at fault.

This ruling may have encouraged the events that soon followed. On December 23, General Gonzalo Evertz, the head of National Guard troops in southern Nicaragua, claimed in a telephone interview with Costa Rica's Radio Reloj that Costa Rican complicity with FSLN forces was continuing. Then, even as the Costa Rican government was requesting a permanent OAS observer to monitor the disputed border, Nicaragua's Foreign Minister alleged that high-caliber fire was coming from Costa Rican territory. Shortly after, Evertz declared that Guanacaste province (lost to Costa Rica more than 150 years before) would soon be recaptured. This pronouncement
was followed by continued Nicaraguan claims of high-caliber cross-border fire and finally by Somoza's threatening to invade Costa Rica. 41

The situation between the two nations verged on war. Two years later, former Security Minister Echevarría revealed that the circumstances were much worse at that time than the Costa Rican public realized. Testifying before a Special Legislative Commission (previously formed to investigate arms trafficking), Echevarría claimed that the Costa Rican government had received five different warnings. He implied that only the efforts of the U.S. ambassador to Costa Rica, Marvin Weissman, had forestalled a Nicaraguan invasion. Presumably, Weissman had called officials in Managua after Echevarría told him Venezuelan jets were ready to bomb Managua if Somoza ordered an attack on Costa Rica. Weissman reported to Echevarría that the invasion was called off "only forty minutes before" it was to have been launched. 42

Carazo had also cabled the OAS, and two days later, an OAS representative promised to send seven observers and four assistants. But that was not the only response from the Costa Rican government. Echevarría later confirmed that a decisive change took place in the government's policy toward Nicaragua. He and Carazo viewed Somoza's threat as a "declaration of war" and acted accordingly. Echevarría ordered the Civil Guard to place mines underneath bridges and dynamite charges on mountain sides in order to secure the province of Guanacaste. 43

Meanwhile, Somoza retreated from his original threat, although he still insisted that mortar fire was coming from across the border and that Costa Rica was aiding the Sandinistas. Subsequent OAS investigations did not prove such claims, but then, OAS officials had limited resources and were foreigners to Costa Rica and Nicaragua. It is also possible that
such officials may have favored the FSLN and other anti-Somoza forces because by this time, most Western Hemisphere countries were appalled by Somoza's conduct.  

The following weeks were quieter, as the OAS officials installed themselves in Liberia, Costa Rica, and Rivas, Nicaragua. But on January 23, 1979, a Costa Rican girl was fatally shot near La Cruz in northern Guanacaste by a Nicaraguan soldier and died two days later. Residents of border towns in Guanacaste sought refuge in schools farther south during the next several days, and Civil Guardsmen redoubled their vigilance along the border. President Carazo filed another protest with the OAS.  

Meanwhile, the President was coming under increasing criticism from the opposition PLN party. Their leader, ex-President Daniel Oduber, called Carazo "the ruler of the great lie." Other members of the PLN accused Carazo and his administration of pursuing a "Nixon-style" policy of "endangering the nation's social peace, weakening the legislative branch, and playing with the country's patriotic feelings." They also blamed Carazo for the problems of the Central American Common Market (CACM). These initial complaints and criticisms were to multiply after the Nicaraguan war ended.  

Relations between Nicaragua and Costa Rica did not improve during February. Nicaraguan claims of mortar fire and Costa Rican complaints of overflights persisted. In response to a reporter's question concerning the existence of a "Venezuela-Panama-Costa Rica axis" against Somoza, President Carazo answered only that Costa Rica desired "to live in peace," and yet the government had sent twenty-five Civil Guardsmen to Venezuela for military training. Two weeks later, Security Minister Echevarría
announced plans for a large mop-up campaign along the border. Termed "Operation Checkmate," its mission was to sweep the northern border's entire four hundred kilometers, using seven hundred men to "eliminate as necessary" either Nicaraguan National Guardsmen or Sandinista guerrillas. A week later, two Nicaraguan civilians were reportedly shot, one fatally, within Costa Rican territory by twelve National Guardsmen. The OAS itself confirmed the report, and within days, "Operation Checkmate" was underway.47

On March 2, Echevarría confirmed reports that the Venezuelan government had recently loaned Costa Rica a supply of M-14 rifles and sufficient ammunition "for an indefinite period." He gave no estimates of the amounts involved, but indicated they were to aid in resolving border problems. Eleven days later, the PLN claimed such an arms loan was illegal because it had not been approved by the Legislative Assembly.48

Concern was also expressed over the potential militarization of Costa Rica. That same day, La República published a document attributed to the Interior Ministry that claimed that the purpose of "Operation Checkmate" was to "disorganize and ridicule guerrilla leaders." Clearly annoyed, Echevarría asserted that the document was only a draft that subsequently had been altered. He also reaffirmed that the mop-up campaign was intended to protect Costa Rica's sovereignty by "taking away the excuse" for the Nicaraguan National Guard to make "incursions into our territory" in pursuit of Sandinistas and other leftists.49 The fact that La República, a mainstream newspaper, published such a document and questioned the border clean-up operation implied support for the FSLN's cause. It also reflected growing popular support in Costa Rica for the guerrillas.
In mid-March, the Nicaraguan government claimed capture of weapons allegedly brought in from Costa Rica. They included Soviet-made rockets, German machine guns, rifles, explosives, and Brazilian-made detonators. The Nicaraguan government further contended that additional arms had arrived the week before, also from Costa Rica. The international media now began to hint at the use of Costa Rican territory by guerrilla forces, probably in response to Nicaraguan charges.50

"Operation Checkmate" halted at the end of March, partly because of the controversy it had raised and partly because of government assertions that border conditions had returned to normal. Questioned about the country's arms situation, Minister Echevarría assured U.S. Representative Eldon Rudd of Arizona that although Venezuela had loaned his country five hundred rifles, none of them were falling into Sandinista hands. They were intended only to fill a shortage that Echevarría claimed he found upon entering government service in 1978. Rudd also expressed concern that such a transfer of rifles made in the United States constituted a violation of the prohibition against re-exportation of arms. This particular issue was never pursued, but as late as May 1981, the Costa Rican government still had not returned the "loaned" rifles.51

As the Nicaraguan war raged, the Costa Rican government's arms situation took a different turn several weeks later. On April 18, a government official reported that some four thousand government weapons--primarily M-76 submachine guns and M-1 rifles--were missing. It was also reported that the Public Security Ministry "customarily" had loaned weapons to prominent private citizens for their personal protection, weapons which were to then be returned subsequently to the outgoing administration.52
Fourteen months later, national concern would again focus on the issue of adequate control over government weaponry.

Relations between the Costa Rican and Nicaraguan governments remained strained throughout April and into May of 1979. On May 1, President Carazo reiterated his refusal to resume diplomatic relations with Nicaragua so long as Somoza was in power. Ten days later, the Nicaraguan government denounced Panama for allegedly supplying arms to the Sandinistas. It also claimed that "international brigades" were openly organizing there with the support of the Panamanian government. 53

At the end of May, Somoza brought charges before the OAS that Panama, Venezuela, and Costa Rica were supplying weapons to the guerrilla forces in Nicaragua. Two days later, he charged that a "massive invasion" had penetrated his country from two points inside Costa Rica's borders. (The invasion proved to consist of only three hundred mercenaries.) Somoza later was proved to be correct on both counts, but by this time, his country was in chaos. In addition, the OAS had come within three votes of condemning him for human rights violations, and he and his government had been denounced world-wide. Under these circumstances, complaints about an invasion were likely to fall on unsympathetic ears. However, a week later the OAS did announce its intention to investigate the situation, but evidently only because Somoza had threatened to invade Costa Rica in retaliation for its support of the rebels. 54

While the Costa Rican government continued to deny any complicity with Nicaraguan rebels, an editorial in La Nación denounced the country's involvement on the side of the FSLN. But the government's policies seemed to bear out its claim of noninterference: in the border area it mobilized more Civil Guardsmen, who continued to arrest Sandinistas. On June 6,
President Carazo went so far as to declare the border region a war zone. Nine days later he warned Somoza not to invade Costa Rica, vowing that "the whole continent would respond." By this time, however, Somoza was too besieged to carry out any previous threats of invasion.  

Then on June 18, the FSLN's recently formed Government for the National Reconstruction met in San José, Costa Rica. While international news agencies now regularly reported Costa Rican aid to the FSLN, events in Nicaragua forced Somoza's ouster within a month. On July 1, delegates from the Panamanian government met with the FSLN provisional junta. Eleven days later, as the FSLN forces closed in on Managua, the Nicaraguan provisional junta met in Puntarenas on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica with Carazo, Panama's Torrijos, and Venezuela's former President Carlos Andrés Pérez. Soon after, on July 17, Anastasio Somoza resigned and fled to the United States, and two days later, the fighting in Nicaragua ceased, parades celebrated the occasion, and the junta began rebuilding its devastated country.

In the weeks following the collapse of the Somoza regime, a ground-swell of moral support flowed from Costa Rica to its war-torn neighbor. Only days before Somoza's fall, a public opinion poll in Costa Rica had confirmed popular approval of President Carazo's leadership during the Nicaraguan crisis. On July 21, Carazo revealed in an interview some of the plans to aid in Nicaraguan reconstruction, including help with the resettlement of nearly sixty thousand refugees, technical assistance, and formation of a group to study the revitalization of trade between Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The Carazo administration also announced plans for the creation of over one hundred "sister-city" arrangements to support
Nicaragua's reconstruction. Materials such as clothing, food, building and medical supplies, as well as professional assistance, were to be sent. Costa Rica's ambassador to Nicaragua announced plans to lead a team of experts and technicians in the fields of agriculture, public health, and rural engineering.57

Additional proposals of aid included the promise of fifteen-day boxes of food to families, and a government pledge to send one thousand retired teachers to aid Nicaragua's literacy program. This latter promise was apparently made "to counteract an alleged increasing Cuban influence in Nicaragua." The Costa Rican government also sent some of its immigration officials to train Nicaraguan personnel at Sandino Airport in Managua and at the border check points. During a visit to Nicaragua on August 8, President Carazo pledged assistance in the establishment of a twenty-five million dollar compensation fund as well as continued support for the new Nicaraguan government. He also took this opportunity to insist that Costa Rica had offered only "moral support, not material aid," during the Nicaraguan conflict.59

But most of these well-intentioned plans were greatly scaled down or never even begun. Bureaucratic delays, a lack of funds, and a growing popular disenchchantment with the FSLN government's Marxist ideology all combined to slow down the various assistance plans.60 For example, the "sister-city" idea never went past the planning stage, although some Costa Rican cities did initiate help on their own. Only forty-six teachers eventually went to Nicaragua, months later than originally promised, and for a shorter time. The teaching project, sparked by naturalized Costa Rican Dr. Peter Duisberg, led to his formation of the Pro-Brotherhood Tico-Nica International Committee comprised of native and recently
naturalized Costa Rican citizens (primarily from the United States). The Committee's two main purposes were to pressure the Costa Rican government into fulfilling its various promises of aid to Nicaragua, and to counteract the increasingly bad press that the media was giving Nicaragua. 61

In December, several Nicaraguan junta members came to Costa Rica to talk with government officials. In their meeting, the Nicaraguans expressed their interest in exchange of petroleum by-products, cooperative efforts for inhibiting coffee rust, avoidance of border area incidents, and assistance in training Sandinista police and immigration personnel. They probably also discussed the refugee problem because at this time, the Immigration Department announced that twelve thousand Nicaraguan refugees were still living in Costa Rica. 62

Although Costa Rica's aid did not equal that originally proposed, a modest level of assistance continued and Nicaraguan leaders met periodically with Costa Rican officials in 1980 to discuss cooperative economic ventures and the resolution of border problems. In November Nicaragua's foreign minister traveled to Costa Rica specifically to discuss the increase in border incidents, but the two governments were totally unable to resolve the matter. 63

One apparent reflection of the increasingly ambivalent feelings between the two nations (in spite of Costa Rican aid) was Nicaragua's decision not to invite President Carazo to its first anniversary celebration of the Revolution. No public speculation occurred as to the reason for such an omission, but Carazo maintained he was too busy anyway. Ten days later, however, in a reference to Fidel Castro, he remarked that he had no desire to "be on a grandstand with any dictator." 64 Perhaps it was an astute
exclusion in that Castro and Cuba rapidly were becoming more closely identified with the Nicaraguan reconstruction process than was Costa Rica.

**Costa Rica and the Arms Probe**

Elsewhere, events soon transpired that would call into question the credibility of the Carazo administration and noticeably alter the political situation in Costa Rica. The very day that Carazo made his comment about Castro, a Panamanian pilot named César Rodríguez crashed on a rural landing strip approximately eighty miles east of San Salvador. He was carrying arms and ammunition evidently intended for the leftist guerrillas in El Salvador. In addition, his flight plan included a stop for loading in Costa Rica. Later rescued by a private Costa Rican airplane, he was flown to Panama. Questioned there by local authorities, he claimed that retired Costa Rican pilot Manuel Enrique Guerra was in charge of arms commerce to El Salvador from Costa Rica. Guerra, now owner of a cargo and passenger aircraft company, immediately denied the allegations, although he readily acknowledged his part in helping the Sandinistas the year before. 65

Even as Costa Rica's Radio Reloj carried official denials of Costa Rican involvement in arms smuggling, a Panamanian news service reported that President Carazo had ordered an investigation following the discovery of a van loaded with modern arms and explosives inside the city of San José. According to national and international media, which had been speculating for several months about arms trafficking from Costa Rica to El Salvador, such an investigation was long overdue. In fact, José Figueres himself initially raised the issue less than two months after the end of the Nicaraguan Revolution. Speaking to a group of Costa Rican businessmen about Nicaragua's future, Don Pepe stated that he had helped unload Cuban
arms from a plane at Llano Grande Airport (located outside Liberia, Guanacaste, in northwestern Costa Rica) during a tour of guerrilla camps in the Costa Rica-Nicaragua border area. Although La República pointed out that this was Figueres' third assertion of the existence of a Cuban-weapons air route, no previous investigation had been made.66

An official investigation did not begin until the Rodríguez plane crash in El Salvador and the simultaneous capture of what were later found to be smuggled, Chinese-made mortar shells apparently stolen from Costa Rica's national arsenal. Led by three legislators and a professional investigator appointed by President Carazo,67 the Legislative Assembly's Special Commission began its work late in June 1980. Its first report did not appear until eleven months later. Although the commission originally intended to complete its findings much sooner than May 1981, a succession of new allegations, revelations, and incidents occurred, requiring further study and the reinterrogation of previous witnesses.68

The first stage of the commission's probe lasted until early January 1981. The country's Judicial Investigation Organization (OIJ) brought four men to trial before Costa Rica's Attorney General on charges of smuggling the Chinese seventy-five-millimeter mortar shells.69 Ten months later, however, the OIJ still had been unable to gather enough evidence, which resulted in nullification of the case. The smuggling incident nevertheless spurred a government inventory of government weaponry following suggestions that the Chinese mortar shells might have been some that were found along the northern border area by Costa Rican Civil Guardsmen. Officials maintained that the shells certainly were not munitions used by the armed forces in Costa Rica, but more likely were left over from the nation's belatedly acknowledged defense efforts during the Nicaraguan
Revolution. The Public Security Minister's plans for destroying such left-
over munitions were halted by President Carazo at the urgings of the Vice-
Minister of Public Security and a commission investigator who wanted the
mortar shells and other munitions studied by the commission. 70

Meanwhile, the Rodríguez plane crash set off an intriguing and
politically damaging investigation. Although the incident proved that
Costa Rican territory could indeed be used for arms shuttling to El
Salvador, Costa Rican officials were quick to point out that this event
was not proof of a widespread arms network operating inside the country.
Salvadoran authorities refrained from accusing the Costa Rican and
Panamanian governments of taking any part in the Rodriguez affair; they
simply urged both governments to carry out their respective inquiries. 71

That the governments of both El Salvador and Costa Rica had diffi-
culty controlling such arms movements into El Salvador is not surprising.
In the area where Rodríguez landed, for instance, 150 airstrips exist; and
more than a thousand airstrips (largely agricultural) exist throughout
Costa Rica. Efforts to pinpoint the exact origin of the Rodríguez shipment
continued to delay the investigation. The armaments carried Venezuelan
markings, however, and appeared to have been intended for the FSLN during
their revolution two years before. The most likely loading spot seemed to
be Playa Tamarindo, on Guanacaste's Pacific coast. To add to the confu-
sion, Rodríguez cited Cuba as the chief source of arms trafficking.
Alberto Lorenzo, a former advisor to President Carazo's Ministry of Public
Security, soon seconded Rodríguez's allegation. 72

At the beginning of July 1980, Lorenzo took the opportunity to
elaborate on his claim before the Special Commission. Citing the involve-
ment of Panama's Omar Torrijos, U.S. President Carter, Fidel Castro, and
President Carazo, Lorenzo asserted that during the Nicaraguan conflict, armaments were flown from Cuba to Panama to Costa Rica before finally being trucked to the FSLN forces in southern Nicaragua. In Panama, Torrijos supposedly skimmed off some arms that were later used as the basis for the current arms trade. According to Lorenzo, the same thing happened in Costa Rica, where only half the weaponry of Cuban origin reached the Sandinistas. Lorenzo further alleged that certain Sandinistas had arms "sent back" to "local Costa Rican communists" at the time the weapons were arriving at Liberia's Llano Grande Airport. This disturbing assertion would claim the attention of the Special Commission again several months later.

Less than two weeks after Lorenzo's charges, the chiefs of the Criminal Investigation Division (DIC), Colonels Guillermo Martí and Mario Fallas, resigned. They complained of a total lack of cooperation by the Carazo government in their attempts to examine arms traffic allegations. Twenty-five DIC detectives followed suit by resigning, which led to the OIJ's assuming the responsibilities of the DIC. In response, both Carazo and his newly-appointed Security Minister, Carlos Arguedas le Franc, insisted that they wanted the investigation to continue and that it had their "full support." Carazo pointed out that a long history of gun-running in Costa Rica existed and then cited the vast confiscation of arms carried out in the previous two years. In a similar vein, Arguedas remarked that the presence of twelve hundred private airstrips made it impossible to control the arms traffic.

But shortly afterwards, Fallas and Martí brushed aside such statements, following Lorenzo's previous claims with an assertion of their own that arms had been flown directly from Cuba to Costa Rica during the Nicaraguan Revolution. Both men testified that they had directed the
weapons deployment at Llano Grande Airport during the Revolution, taking their orders from Willie Azofeifa, Chief of Staff of the Costa Rican Public Security Ministry, who was stationed at Llano Grande. Azofeifa and an FSLN leader, Costa Rican Elio Espinar, were in charge of dividing the weaponry between the Sandinista and Costa Rican stockpiles. The Costa Rican government hired EXACO cargo airlines, owned by Chilean Fernando Carrasco Illanes, to fly the weaponry from Cuba. Costa Rican pilots flew some thirty trips with EXACO's planes, bringing in approximately one million pounds of armaments, a quarter of which were intended for Costa Rican arsenals. The rest were trucked in Public Security vehicles to the FSLN forces at the border. Afterward, said Martí and Fallas, Espinar and Civil Aviation Director Roberto de Benedictis paid the Costa Rican pilots.

President Carazo immediately questioned the credibility of Fallas and Martí. On July 19, Public Security officials, directors of the Public Force, and National Security agents responded with a communique acknowledging their participation in bringing arms into Costa Rica, but vehemently denied receiving any illicit payments for that operation. The following day, the President appeared on national television and radio to explain Costa Rica's role in the Nicaraguan Revolution. First of all, he admitted that he had allowed the importation of "planes, rifles, ammunition, and anti-aircraft guns, all defensive weapons, to protect Costa Rica"; second, he insisted that this importation was altogether distinct from what he considered to be the object of the Special Commission's investigation: the "sale, theft, and trafficking in arms for money." Carazo concluded that there was no reason, therefore, to investigate what he termed "the maintenance of security of Costa Rica."
The events of subsequent weeks demonstrated how sensitive the whole issue was, however, and how necessary was the continuing probe of Costa Rica's importation of armament during the Nicaraguan crisis. For instance, contradictory statements abounded regarding the maintenance of inventories of the incoming weaponry. According to Martí, Azofeifa told him not to keep track of the incoming war materials. Then ex-Minister Echevarría (Azofeifa's boss at the time) asserted on the one hand that inventories were kept at the two arms depositories, El Pelón and Santa Rosa ranches, and on the other hand, that it was impossible to determine how much weaponry actually arrived in Costa Rica. National police chief Colonel Fernando Muñoz, who had been in charge of incoming arms at the Santa Rosa ranch, affirmed that no inventory was kept; but scarcely two months later, Muñoz produced a notebook containing a daily record of arms shipments to the Santa Rosa ranch—the first and apparently the only such record.77

Next to testify was EXACO's owner, Carrasco Illanes. He described arranging seven flights, each containing twenty-two-thousand-pound shipments, and he named the pilots involved and the pay they received. Throughout his account, he maintained that none of the flights came from Cuba, and the pilots backed up his story.78 Carrasco also stated that his planes were fueled by the government's oil company, RECOPE (Costa Rica Oil Refinery), and that he had paid for the fuel. He added that because of the emergency situation, however, these flights were never required to go through normal civil aviation procedures, and thus were never recorded. Echevarría later explained that these actions were intended to keep Somoza from discovering the flights.79

The end of July brought the eagerly awaited Panamanian arms report that was expected to explain Panama's involvement in the arms traffic. It
proved a disappointment to the Costa Rican Special Commission, however, because it simply confirmed details of Rodríguez's involvement and denied any collusion with "Panamanian military or civilian authority." The Panamanian report essentially handed the entire arms trafficking problem back to Costa Rica.  

As the arms probe continued in Costa Rica, the government released a report stating that three guerrilla training camps had been discovered in the northern province of Alajuela. Predictably, this announcement brought a rebuke from La Nación, whose editorial blamed the existence of such camps on the government's leniency toward Sandinista operations within Costa Rican territory during the Nicaraguan war. The next day, the Minister to the President reminded the media that the Costa Rican populace had been overwhelmingly pro-Sandinista during the Revolution and expressed dismay at the media's current criticism of the government's involvement.

On September 3, 1980, the Legislative Assembly passed a law intended to strengthen the Special Commission by permitting punishment for perjured testimony. Although the bill was well-intentioned and needed because of increasing contradictions in testimony, President Carazo vetoed it five weeks later, a strange action for one asserting his "full support" of the efforts of the Special Commission.

Nonetheless, the commission's investigative endeavors continued, despite the growing exasperation of its members. In mid-September, the commission's president complained that deception and outright fabrication were inhibiting efforts to examine the issue. In the meantime, Azofeifa took the stand. In his testimony, he denied any wrongdoing in the distribution of the imported arms, mentioned for the first time a Colombian connection, and admitted that it was "possible" that some arms came from
Cuba. In addition, Azofeifa asserted that only the type of armament and not the quantity was inventoried upon arrival. The last claim preceded Muñoz's dramatic presentation of his notebook. 83

Two weeks later, former Deputy Public Security Minister Echevarría testified. Adhering to the official government line that all arms had come from Panama and Venezuela, he said that he could not remember any flights with arms from Cuba. But the second half of October saw a flurry of activity and several more intriguing developments. Azofeifa claimed that earlier in 1980 he had received orders from former Minister Echevarría not to show a portion of the government arsenal to deputies investigating the possible "militarization" of the Public Security forces. A retired pilot then testified that sixty flights were made carrying arms and that some of these had originated in Cuba. The Public Security Ministry responded to these declarations by placing a temporary, and obviously belated, freeze on the import and sale of firearms. Finally, Security Minister Arguedas announced plans to destroy the "war booty" as well as other confiscated armaments. This last proposal, now recommended by the Special Commission itself, brought questions and ridicule from the media. A La Nación editorial attacked it as "removal of the evidence," but the commission offered no explanation. 84

Former Public Security Minister Echevarría finally testified in late October. He began by criticizing the Special Commission's handling of the arms probe in matters "better left alone," and then pointed out that plenty of newsmen were at the border during the Sandinista Revolution, and "they knew what was going on." Echevarría then proceeded to explain Costa Rica's role in the Nicaraguan conflict. Confirming most of the accusations that Somoza and his commanders had made during the war,
Echevarría justified them as "indispensable to national security." The former minister also denied that any Costa Rican personnel had made flights to Cuba. On November 4, President Carazo reiterated that denial before the Special Commission and supported Echevarría's explanation.

On November 27, a Costa-Rican-registered plane landed and crashed forty miles southeast of San Salvador. The two fliers in it were quickly rescued by another plane and flown out of reach of pursuing authorities, suggesting some kind of sophisticated coordination. The Salvadorans found the plane, owned by none other than EXACO, loaded with weapons.

This event normally would have been a headline story for Costa Rican newspapers, but it was eclipsed by a leaked accusation by one Fernando Trejos Masís that President Carazo personally had been paid thirty million dollars by the Sandinistas for aiding the Nicaraguan Revolution. Trejos had made this claim during otherwise confusing secret testimony before OIJ officials. Carazo immediately went to the people with another television and radio broadcast and filed a slander suit against Trejos as well. Such an accusation, however outrageous, in the midst of a worsening economy and increased public questioning of Carazo and his administration, could only further reduce Carazo's credibility. The charges and countercharges continued throughout December and into the next year.

By January 1981, the Special Commission was ready to conclude its investigation. Although many unanswered questions remained, the commission had determined that Costa Rica had been used as an arms conduit during the Nicaraguan war, contrary to the denials of public officials at the time. The investigators had also ascertained that control of imported armaments was at best questionable. In addition, the possibility existed
that individuals or groups other than the Sandinistas and the Costa Rican government had received the incoming weaponry. Finally, and most intriguing of all, the commission had heard testimony of Cuban involvement during the Nicaraguan crisis, but still had no proof of such claims. The investigators nevertheless prepared to issue a report of their findings. 88

But on January 18, Honduran authorities captured a group of leftists in the province of Comayagua. Among them was Costa Rican Angel Méndez Castro, a school teacher from the province of Alajuela. Honduran officials promptly accused Méndez of bringing arms from Costa Rica by way of Nicaragua. Although he admitted making several trips with cargo obtained in the vicinity of the University of Costa Rica in San José, Méndez claimed that he had been told that he was carrying medical supplies and was simply a victim of circumstances. The incident, however, seemed to illustrate what might have happened to uninventoryed and uncontrolled weaponry that entered Costa Rica two years before. 89

A more dramatic event occurred shortly after the Honduran guerrilla capture. On January 25, the Salvadoran Air Force shot down a plane piloted by Costa Rican Julio Romero Talavera less than fifty miles south-east of San Salvador. Romero had just finished parachuting two packages containing thirty-three FAL rifles and nine thousand rounds of ammunition to waiting leftist guerrillas. 90 Back in Costa Rica, authorities busily pieced together the preceding events; they were helped a few days later when the imprisoned Romero willingly told what he knew of the incident. Banned from the air for previous irregularities, the EXACO-owned plane was authorized at the last minute by Civil Aviation Chief Roberto de Benedictis to fly to Managua on a supposed "mercy mission" to bring EXACO owner Fernando Carrasco back to a Costa Rican hospital for medical treatment.
After flying to Managua, however, the original pilot did not return, and Romero was awakened the following night to fly the EXACO plane from Managua to El Salvador. In a prepared statement issued from his Salvadoran cell, Romero alleged that Carrasco had offered to pay him to fly supplies to the Salvadoran rebels, but Romero claimed he did not accept payment for this flight. Furthermore, he described how simple it had been to leave Managua, saying that he encountered no security precautions at all. His otherwise revealing account did not say when or where the weapons were loaded.

The reaction in Costa Rica was immediate and predictable. The media denounced government "inaction" and "indifference" and alluded to the "apparent complicity of national authorities." Carazo ordered the grounding of all planes registered by Carrasco, and immigration authorities cancelled his residency visa days later. In addition, de Benedictis resigned. Meanwhile, residents of Guanacaste told reporters that flights had been leaving sporadically from Liberia since the previous April. All of this proved that the arms traffic investigation was far from over.

Meanwhile, President Carazo was beset by problems. On February 12, Public Security Minister Arguedas, Police Chief Muñoz, and the Civil Registry Director all resigned; Willie Azofeifa, now Chief Clerk, was given a "temporary separation." Then President Carazo's choice of a new Public Security Minister precipitated the resignation of that department's deputy minister. With the exception of Azofeifa, all those resigning cited "personal reasons" and the desire to "pursue private interests." A Radio Reloj commentary termed the shake-up a "crisis" and quoted rumors of a scandal involving the issuance of visas to Cuban refugees. Although these rumors were confirmed less than two weeks later, no resigning official was implicated.
In late February, the U.S. Department of State issued its controversial "White Paper," which documented the flow of arms from Cuba to El Salvador. Costa Rica received only a passing reference in a report designed to implicate Cuban and Soviet-bloc involvement. In that reference, the White Paper spoke only of "overland operations," never mentioning the periodic clandestine plane flights that by now were acknowledged throughout Central America and had been witnessed by many Costa Ricans. 94

Three weeks later, the firebombing in San Jose of a U.S. embassy van containing three U.S. marines and their Costa Rican chauffeur stunned Costa Rica. Less than an hour later, a bomb exploded inside the Honduran Embassy. That same day, while national and international leaders condemned the bombings, a previously unknown leftist guerrilla group, Comando Carlos Argüero Echevarría, claimed responsibility. 95 More attacks followed in the ensuing months before OIJ officials were able to round up the terrorists, and although many turned out to be foreigners, a substantial number of Costa Ricans were among those captured. 96

A week after the initial bombings, as the Special Commission was again ready to issue its arms traffic report, Llano Grande's former airport administrator and four pilots electrified the nation with a damning confession. Convinced that the recent bombings signalled the development of terrorist movements in Costa Rica that were a direct result of uncontrolled importation of arms during the Nicaraguan crisis, the five decided to break their silence and admit to perjuring themselves months before when questioned about arms importation. Now they confirmed Cuban participation in the Nicaraguan Revolution that had employed Costa Rica as an arms conduit. What had been hidden previously under the guise of "national security" now became public knowledge for the same reason. 97
Although ex-Minister Echevarría immediately denied the pilots' confession, President Carazo went before the nation, admitted authorizing the shipments of arms from Cuba, and assumed full responsibility. He emphasized, however, that they were weapons bought by the Panamanian government, and therefore Panamanian property, even though they had been flown in from Havana.98

Carazo's speech prompted a call for his resignation by several national political figures. However, Luís Alberto Monge, once again the PLN's presidential candidate, expressed the view that such a resignation would set off a constitutional crisis and further damage the country. Carazo vowed not to resign, reiterating the need to distinguish between arms trafficking for profit and arms imported for defending the nation's sovereignty. With President Carazo's admission, Echevarría also admitted allowing the shipments, but insisted that because of the immediacy of Somoza's threats and the inability of Costa Rica to buy arms, "we had to get them where we could." Assuring the media that no government agreement was made with Cuban authorities, Echevarría then refused to reveal any more details of the arms import, terming such information a "state secret."

While the newly vindicated Colonels Martí and Fallas looked on, Manuel Antonio Guerra and Roberto de Benedictis also confirmed their part in the Cuban connection.99 De Benedictis even admitted suggesting, on the advice of Azofeifa, that the five pilots keep their mouths shut. Inevitably, rumors circulated that Carazo had made a trip to Havana to meet with Castro. By this time, Costa Ricans were prepared to believe anything about their president.100

Meanwhile, the five pilots outlined their trips. They testified to making a total of twenty-one flights representing well over six hundred
thousand pounds of arms and munitions. They indicated that the "air bridge" from Panama began late in 1978 and said that Panamanian pilots transported the rest of the weaponry. They also insisted that two flights came in from Portugal and West Germany, but later investigation did not confirm this statement. The pilots further told of carrying Cuban personnel, and of seeing Raul Castro on several occasions and even Fidel on another. These allegations brought calls by two national newspapers for a break in ties with Cuba, relations that had been strained since their re-establishment in 1977. Citing the country's economic straits as well, La Nación condemned the Carazo administration for its actions in leading Costa Rica into "a morass of incredulity, mistrust, and frustration." Days later President Carazo's cabinet approved a recommendation to resubmit the Special Commission's perjury bill. On April 14, television, radio, and news personnel met with commission investigators and urged them to continue their probe. 101

Soon afterward the government announced its intention to return borrowed weapons to Panama. This plan immediately set off yet another controversy, as the media and legislators alike pointed out the difficulty of returning something supposedly not even inventoried. Moreover, as Radio Reloj reminded the country, the arms were presumably returned at the end of the Nicaraguan conflict, and all ensuing government-published inventories had not indicated any leftover weaponry from Panama. 102 The government released a list of arms, but failed to clarify the issue. 103 The consequence of all this confusion was that Panamanian pilots made twenty-five flights the following week, taking approximately one hundred twenty-five thousand pounds of weapons and munitions back to Panama. 104
But during the Panamanian arms controversy, one final witness testified to the Special Commission before it issued its report. On April 21, ex-Sandinista commander Alejandro César Martínez jolted the investigators with his statement that between four and six hundred FAL rifles were sent to a local group of "leftist extremists" in the province of Alajuela. Martínez named two Nicaraguan directorate members as the ones responsible for sending the weaponry. Although Eden Pastora quickly sent a note to the investigators denying Martínez's charges, La República denounced the shipment and recalled earlier testimony by one of the four men indicted in the mortar-shell smuggling case. Almost a year before, the alleged smuggler had claimed that arms imported into Llano Grande Airport were sent to Alajuela—the opposite direction from which arms would go if meant for Costa Rican stockpiles or the Sandinistas.

Martínez's claims thus returned the investigation to its starting point of July 1980. His testimony apparently confirmed initial allegations by Alberto Lorenzo that some arms intended for the Sandinistas had been diverted to clandestine Costa Rican groups. Furthermore, such testimony underscored the importance of the arms probe.

Conclusions

On May 14, 1981, the long-awaited arms-traffic report was delivered to key government officials and various media sources. It represented the distillation of three thousand pages of testimony given by seventy people. The document included a summary of the arms investigation, with detailed accounts of the Rodríguez, Romero, and Méndez cases; a discussion of arms imports and airport procedures; several arms and munitions inventories; and the commission's conclusions and recommendations.
But the seventy-three-page report left many questions unanswered. Chief among them was the question of exactly how much weaponry actually came into Costa Rica during the Nicaraguan Revolution. The best estimate was one million pounds, of which a quarter to a half was intended for Costa Rican arsenals. Sources disagreed as to whether the Costa-Rica-bound weaponry was inventoried or not. The Special Commission's report condemned the poor regulation of arsenals as well as the lack of controls of the incoming armament. It offered pages of suggestions to improve the archaic arms-storage system and also published the government's latest inventories, including a list of arms officially borrowed from Panama. But Fernando Muñoz's much publicized notebook that supposedly contained a daily record of arms admitted to the Santa Rosa ranch received no attention whatsoever.

Furthermore, the report did not clear up certain confusions surrounding the imported Panamanian armament. For instance, if one hundred twenty-five thousand pounds returned to Panama constituted all or most of what was specifically lent to Costa Rica, the amount fell far short of the previous estimate, between a quarter and a half million pounds. If, however, it was simply the balance of previously returned weaponry, then further examination was necessary to ascertain why such a balance was retained, and also why the government implied that the balance had been kept for Special Commission inspection when that committee did not exist until a year later. It is also noteworthy that although a leftist group or groups carried out terrorist attacks in Costa Rica during the spring of 1981, none of the weaponry found in their possession (with the exception of the FAL rifles) fit the descriptions of the weaponry brought in by Costa Rican and Panamanian pilots. Nonetheless, the original lack of controls
constituted a justifiable and important concern for Costa Rica's officials and its people.

In addition to these questions raised by the report, there were other significant implications that the report raised. Those who had followed the events closely were not shocked by the report. Similarly, those who had relied on headlines and gossip were not surprised by the investigators' call for a "moral sanction" against President Carazo and ex-Public Security Minister Echevarría. President Carazo was denounced nationwide, but not for his arms traffic for profit—the investigators readily admitted they had no proof of that—nor for his decision to import arms. Instead, the commission censured Carazo and Echevarría for going "beyond the limits of their legal functions," and for "obstructing the exercise of the investigative powers that the Constitution grants to the Legislative Assembly." Thus, the report did not deny the threat that had faced Costa Rica during the Nicaraguan Revolution. The investigators could understand that Carazo felt justified in bending the law that forbids the import of arms, either loaned or bought, without prior Legislative Assembly approval. But the commission insisted that once that crisis was over, the president should have reported to the legislative body the emergency steps he had taken to protect Costa Rica.

Governmental policy during the Nicaraguan conflict was undoubtedly affected by popular sentiment. For more than forty years, the Costa Rican people had lived next to a society and political system quite different from their own. During the Nicaraguan war, they were clearly against the Somoza regime. Their opposition solidified with the death of two of their country's Civil Guards in November 1978 and of the fourteen-year-old girl scarcely two months later.
Thus, when the FSLN forces began openly to use Costa Rican territory, a conspiracy of silence resulted. The media led the conspiracy, choosing to look the other way rather than publicly report their government's involvement. When the international media hinted at Costa Rican participation in March 1979 and spoke with assurance of that assistance in June, the Costa Rican media echoed the denials of its people and its government.

Furthermore, the much publicized clean-up operations seemed to bear out government claims of both neutrality and control of their border. Nor could the OAS surveillance teams prove the collusion of Costa Rica and Panama with the Sandinistas. Although members of the opposition PLN occasionally questioned or denounced the policies of President Carazo and Minister Echevarría, the public did not join in those criticisms. When the war ended, the denials continued and Costa Ricans generously aided Nicaragua in its rebuilding efforts.

Then two things happened. First, the Sandinista government asserted its Marxist ideology more strongly, at the same time affiliating itself more closely with Cuba. Second, the arms probe began. What had started as a straightforward investigation of arms commerce soon exposed hidden government policy during and after the Nicaraguan Revolution. The official denials of Costa Rican involvement quickly faded. The Costa Rican people learned that the arms that came through their country were shipped directly from Cuba. They felt betrayed by the FSLN and by their government because they had not been told the full extent of their government's role in the war. How they would have reacted, had they known, is debatable. President Carazo doubtless sensed the Costa Ricans' ambivalence toward the Sandinistas' Marxist leanings. Public disclosure that arms were
being flown in from Cuba would have been political suicide and, quite possibly, a threat to the country's peace. A wiser alternative seemed to be to keep the Cuban source of military aid a secret.\textsuperscript{112}

However, the cover-up and Carazo's belated explanations may have been far more damaging to his reputation and the country's international prestige than speedy acknowledgement of the arms flights at the war's end. Public admission of the Cuban connection certainly would not have posed a threat to Costa Rica's national security a full year after the end of the Nicaraguan Revolution, but official denials hurt Costa Rica's credibility and made President Carazo's veto of the perjury bill a suspicious move.\textsuperscript{113}

The opposition PLN could not have asked for a better political issue. Yet curiously, they have not exploited the controversy nearly as much as might be expected, nor has it been a major political issue in the ensuing election. This situation may be due to several factors. First, the economy has understandably been the country's chief concern. Second, the arms traffic scandal, Cuba's role in it, and the attempted cover-up by President Carazo and his former Minister Echevarría speak rather eloquently for themselves of the administration's poor judgment. Most obviously, Carazo is constitutionally prohibited from running again for president and from publicly supporting his party's candidate.\textsuperscript{114} Thus, Carazo and his administration have not been central to this year's campaign. Nonetheless, given the tendencies of political parties, it seems likely that had there been no economic crisis, the arms controversy would have been fully exploited by the PLN.

The issue did affect Costa Rica's relations with Cuba. During the second week of May 1981, the Carazo administration suspended its consular ties with the Cuban government. Although Cuban involvement in the arms
traffic and the suspicions of the Carazo administration about local terrorists undoubtedly colored the decision, the break was officially attributed to an offensive Cuban note "attacking" Costa Rica. Cuban diplomats had apparently circulated this note at the United Nations more than four months before, but it had only recently come to the attention of the Costa Rican government. The note thus provided a quick and politically painless way for the Carazo administration to defuse growing internal pressure for such a break.

A final political issue was the conduct of Don Pepe Figueres, one of the architects of modern Costa Rica. Figueres' donation of arms to Eden Pastora recalls the dreams of the former Caribbean Legion. Although the group had long since disbanded, Figueres had the satisfaction of helping conclude an endeavor first attempted more than thirty years before. Ironically, he aided a movement he knew held strong Marxist convictions. But his animosity toward the Somoza family, aggravated on numerous occasions during the preceding three decades, proved a stronger argument in favor of assisting the FSLN.

In addition, Don Pepe's actions (not to mention those of the Carazo administration) demonstrated the relative ease with which Costa Rica could be used as a channel for weapons movement. Those actions harked back to times when internal civil wars spilled over to neighboring countries and foreign intervention was commonplace. The exploits of the buccaneers of Spanish colonial times, the filibusters of the mid-nineteenth century, and finally, the efforts of groups like the Caribbean Legion all underscored the traditional fluidity of Central America's regional borders. While those borders have been more jealously guarded in recent years, arms trafficking
has still been a way of life in Central America, including Costa Rica, for at least the past thirty years.

Costa Rica's intermittent involvement has been traced from its origins in Costa Rica's short 1948 Revolution to the present-day arms scandal. Costa Rica's tolerance of political exile groups and their trafficking in arms (encouraged by José Figueres during the years following the 1948 Revolution) has allowed the nation to be used as a staging area for the invasion of other countries. During the Nicaraguan war, the Carazo administration took advantage of not only that attitude, but also of the inherent difficulty in monitoring guerrilla border activities, and thus aided the Sandinista victory over Somoza.

But the subsequent arms probe, with its revelations and reactions from public authorities as high as the President, were damaging both to Costa Rica's leaders and to the self-esteem of its people. At the time of the disclosures, Carazo claimed it was necessary to distinguish the issue of arms trade for money from that of borrowing arms for the defense of the country's sovereignty. That distinction, however, and the definition of what constitutes the legitimate defense of one's country, were precisely at the crux of the problem. To further complicate the situation, there were inconsistencies in government foreign policy during the Nicaraguan crisis as well as deception by public officials once the war was over. Finally came the question of violation of the Costa Rican constitution. Many of these issues still need to be dealt with. By the end of 1981, not one person implicated in the arms scandal had yet been indicted.

As the Special Commission reached the close of its investigative efforts, however, Costa Ricans were more hopeful for their country's future. In the first place, the commission deserved praise for both its
persistence and the relative openness with which it carried out its probe. Secondly, the Judicial Investigation Organization had demonstrated its effectiveness in gathering evidence related to the political scandal involving the Carazo administration and in capturing many of the extremists who have recently plagued Costa Rica. In addition, Costa Rica's democratic process appears to have weathered the political storms of the past three years surprisingly well. Finally, with the 1982 elections, the National Liberation Party will almost certainly win control of the Costa Rican government, bringing in a new administration headed by Luís Alberto Monge.

But whether these factors will be equal to the task of restoring Costa Rica's internal and international credibility remains to be seen. The present financial crisis has brought Costa Rica's economy to a virtual standstill. Violence in nearby El Salvador and Guatemala, and an increasingly militarized Nicaragua next door, undoubtedly will further affect the nation's political future. All in all, Costa Rica will be harder pressed than ever to maintain its traditional stability.
Notes

List of Abbreviations Used for Sources
Cited in the Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACAN</td>
<td>Panama City ACAN (radio station)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFP</td>
<td>Paris AFP (radio station)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAT</td>
<td>Latin American Index (magazine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LATIN</td>
<td>Buenos Aires LATIN (radio station)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN</td>
<td>La Nación</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LR</td>
<td>La República</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDS</td>
<td>Managua Domestic Service (radio station)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYT</td>
<td>New York Times (newspaper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Prensa Libre (newspaper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>Radio Reloj (radio station)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSDS</td>
<td>San Salvador Domestic Service (radio station)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Tico Times (newspaper)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


2 Richard Millet's Guardians of the Dynasty (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977) is an excellent study of that infamous militarization process originated under the guiding hand of the United States in 1927.


In Costa Rica: Its Socio-Economic Correlates (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1974), Robert Harvey Trudeau demonstrates how misleading certain statistics can be, however, in relation to Costa Rica's supposed egalitarian system. One example is landownership: "... about 90% of the farm units in Costa Rica are owned rather than rented. ... 44% of these units ... are between 1.7 and 16.5 acres. ... Half of the 44% are smaller than 8.5 acres. The largest farms, those over 425 acres, constitute only 3.5% of the farm units, but own 53% of the land" (p. 23). Lic. Jose ML Salazar Navarrete's "Politica Agraria" in Chester Zelaya, ed., Costa Rica Contemporanea--Tomo I (San Jose: Editorial Costa Rica, 1979) claims that Trudeau's figures (from 1963) scarcely changed until 1973. The past years, though, "parece haberse presentado una tendencia a una mejor distribucion de la propiedad" (p. 216).

My account relies heavily on both the U.S. Government's Transdex and FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service) publications, which carry numerous accounts of quarrels. For border and waterway rights, see Gordon Ireland, Boundaries, Possessions, and Conflicts in Central and North America and the Caribbean (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), pp. 3-24.

Ameringer, pp. 4-25.

Ameringer, pp. 27-40, 57.


Diario de Costa Rica (San José), 26 (pp. 1, 9), 27 (pp. 1, 9) January 1954; La Nación (LN) (San José), 6 (pp. 1, 2), 7 (pp. 1, 12) April 1954; Ameringer, p. 58; LN, 13 (pp. 1, 9), 14 (pp. 1, 9) April 1954; Ameringer, p. 119.

Ameringer, pp. 121-23.

Millet, pp. 214, 224; Ameringer, p. 139.

Figueres and his followers formed the PLN in 1951 after completion of the ruling junta's eighteen-month term (Ameringer, pp. 99-100). Their major opposition party over the next two decades was the National Unity Party (PUN), formed prior to World War II. Among the PLN people whom Marshall implicated were two men who had worked with Figueres in the 1948

19 LN, 18 (p. 11), 21 (p. 14), 22 (p. 10), 26 (p. 3) September and 29 October 1957; LN, 26 January 1958, p. 7. The fact that Figueres was President at this time lends itself to intriguing speculation.

20 Personal interview with Don José Figueres, in San José, Costa Rica, 9 April 1981; Ameringer, p. 154. Interestingly enough, the intermediary was PLN's current Presidential candidate, Luís Alberto Monge. Figueres worked with Castro up until it became obvious that he was Marxist and his loyalties did not lie with the United States (Ameringer, pp. 149-57).

21 Ameringer, pp. 153, 159-61; Millet, p. 225. The only other significant arms case that I could find after this date involved a Miguel Ruiz Herrera, who was discovered with a considerable supply of arms in his home in November 1961. At the time of his capture, Ruiz's name was found on a list of invitations to a Calderonista reunion. Calderón, however, denied knowing Ruiz. A week after he was captured, Ruiz made a daring escape, presumably to Nicaragua, and was not heard from again. Prensa Libre (PL) (San José), 10 (pp. 1, 6), 17 (pp. 1, 4), 18 (p. 1) November 1961.

22 Millet, p. 230.

23 Millet, pp. 236-4; Ameringer, p. 255; La Nación (San José), 21 December 1973, p. 54-A, Vol. no. 1053, pp. 11-12, and 6 March 1974, p. 4-A, Vol. no. 1095, pp. 55-56 (from Transdex file); Michael Skol, U.S. Embassy Political Section chief in Costa Rica, from a lecture at the Bi-Cultural Center in San José, 24 April 1981.


26 Panama City ACAN (ACAN) 2027 GMT, 22 August 1978 (FBIS file); Panama City Circuito RPC 1230 GMT, 24 August 1978; Figueres interviews, 31 March and 9 April 1981; La República (LR) (San José), 20 May 1981, p. 3.


28 Pastora even claimed that the FSLN had paid certain Legislative Assembly deputies (congressmen) as well as the air traffic controller at Llano Grande. The latter denied this allegation and no deputies, of course, came forward. Admitting that he had no first-hand knowledge, however, Pastora could name no one. The deputies were outraged, though


31 LN, 21 (pp. 6, 11-A), 22, 26 (p. 4-A) September 1978; RR 1730 GMT, 30 September 1978, p. 4; RR 1730 GMT, 3 October 1978, p. 2.

32 RR 0039 GMT, 29 September 1978, p. 1; LN, 25 (p. 3-A), 27 (p. 9-A) September 1978; Buenos Aires LATIN (LATIN) 2032 GMT, 28 September 1978, p. 2; RR 0100 GMT, 4 October 1978, p. 1; ACAN 2325 GMT, 18 December 1978, p. 1. As early as December 1978, the government announced that more than 400 Sandinista guerrillas had been arrested and deported to Panama and Venezuela.


34 TT, 6, 13 October 1978; Paris AFP (AFP) 1515 GMT, 13 October 1978, p. 1.


38 RR 1730 GMT, 6 December 1978, p. 1; La Nación (San José), 9 December 1978, p. 4. La Nación also published a "Resolution Adopted by Newsmen's Association of Costa Rica" condemning Carazo's action (9 December 1978, pp. 2-3).

39 LATIN 0005 GMT, 6 December 1978, p. 1; RR 1730 GMT, 6 December 1978, p. 1 (Radio Reloj's broadcast claimed that President Carazo's actions were "in accordance with the law"); RR 0100 GMT, 7 December 1978, p. 2. The constitution appears to favor Carazo. With reference to the presidential and cabinet powers, Article 140, section 6, states that the President's administration has the authority "to maintain order and tranquility in the nation; to take such steps as may be necessary to safeguard public liberties." When later explaining Carazo's actions, Minister of the President Cordero Cruceri used very similar terminology. The "drafting" technique, however, is not alluded to in any provision of the constitution.


42 TT, 7 November 1980.

43 AFP 0424 GMT, 28 December 1978, p. 2; RR 1817 GMT, 29 December 1978, p. 2; TT, 7 November 1980.

44 RR 0045 GMT, 29 December 1978, p. 3. In addition, on 30 December 1978, the OAS Permanent Council unanimously voted a resolution that Nicaragua "abstain from threats, aggressive acts, or use of armed forces against the Republic of Costa Rica." LAL, 16-31 December 1978, Vol. VI, no. 24, p. 98.


48 The PLN was referring to a law passed on 18 December 1978, which reads: "All purchases or acquisitions by the state, under any circumstances, of military equipment, must have prior approval of the Legislative Assembly, except for small arms routinely used by our police force." La Prensa (Panama City), 29 May 1981, p. 2-A, from Transdex file, Vol. no. 2325, p. 21.

49 ACAN 2338 GMT, 2 March 1979, p. 1; AFP 1621 GMT, 13 March 1979, pp. 1-2; RR 1630 GMT, 13 March 1979, p. 2; interview in Cromos (Bogotá), 4 April 1979, pp. 14-19, from Transdex, Vol. no. 2006, p. 4.


51 RR 0000 GMT, 30 March 1979, p. 1; ACAN 2340 GMT, 30 March 1979, p. 1; Comisión de Asuntos Especiales, Informe sobre el Trafico de Armas--Primera Parte, Epe. 8768, Asamblea Legislativa, San José, Costa Rica (published 14 May 1981), p. 53. To add to the confusion, the inventory that the Informe quotes lists the 500 arms as FAL rifles. That is most likely the case; Rudd apparently did not follow up his concerns.

52 ACAN 1700 GMT, 18 April 1979, p. 2.

53 AFP 2119 GMT, 1 May 1979, p. 1; Managua Estación X 0450 GMT, 11 May 1979, p. 2.


58 RR 1330 GMT, 5 August 1979, p. 1.

59 RR 1200 GMT, 4 August 1979, p. 2; ACAN 1755 GMT, 4 August 1979, p. 8; RR 1200 GMT, 9 August 1979, p. 2.

60 Michael Skol remarked in his lecture of 24 April 1981 that while "3 to 5 percent" of Costa Ricans affiliate with the country's small Communist Party (Pueblo Unido), at least "80 percent" are adamantly opposed to communism.

61 Interview with Dr. Peter Duisberg, and attendance of a Pro-Brotherhood Tico-Nica International Committee meeting in San José, Costa Rica, on 20 June 1981. In June 1981, the group was still trying to push such aid; they appeared to be the only group making such efforts. Among the projects they were focusing on: granting scholarships to Nicaraguan students to study in Costa Rica, particularly in the sciences; building up cultural relations through theater productions, etc.; working out a technical exchange; arranging to have public speaking programs in Costa Rica to promote better relations and improve public opinion.


67. The Special Commission consisted of Gerardo Bolaños Alpízar (PUP), President; Marcelo Prieto Jiménez (PLN), Secretary; Alexis Quesada Murillo (PUP); plus Dr. Martí Quirós Navino.

68. RR 1200 GMT, 18 June 1981, p. 2; Informe, pp. 1, 2.

69. The four men were businessman Emilio Gazel, the buyer; airport mechanic Jorge Brade, the alleged intermediary; and air section chiefs Werner Lotz and Ronaldo Alfaro, those who allegedly extracted the shells from storage.


72. ACAN 1902 GMT, 17 June 1980, p. 5; RR 1200 GMT, 16 July 1980, p. 5; TT, 24 (p. 3), 27 (p. 5) June, 1 July (pp. 1, 4) 1980.

73. TT, 4 July 1980, pp. 1, 4.

74. TT, 15 July 1980, p. 1; RR 0131 GMT, 15 July 1980, p. 6; RR 1200 GMT, 16 July 1980, p. 5. Arguedas replaced former Security Minister Echevarría Brealey when he resigned the end of the previous May--barely two weeks before the arms scandal broke.

75. RR 1730 GMT, 17 July 1980, p. 1; RR 1730 GMT, 18 July 1980, p. 2; TT, 18 (pp. 1, 3), 25 (pp. 1, 5) July 1980. Carazo's son, Rolando, was also mentioned, though his involvement was never proven. He died in a motorcycle accident sometime after the Nicaraguan Revolution ended.


77. La Nación (San José), 22 July 1980, pp. 10-A, 1-2; TT, 25 July (p. 5), 3 October (p. 4) 1980.

78. Among the pilots he named were Carlos Solano, Julio Calderón, Julio Saavedra, and Roberto Kohkemper.


80. RR 0100 GMT, 1 August 1980, p. 5; TT, 1 August 1980, p. 3. However, it seems reasonable to assume that if Torrijos had been involved, as Lorenzo claimed, he would have silenced any concerted efforts to investigate the affair in Panama.
Considering that one of the chief concerns of the commission was the possible militarization of Costa Rica, it is likely that its motive in ordering the destruction of excess weaponry was to dispel this concern.

Testifying in April 1981, ex-Sandinista commander Alejandro Martinez said that such a payoff would have been impossible simply because the FSLN did not have that kind of money. Trejos had cited his daughter as witness to the affair. She was a former companion of Nicaraguan junta member Humberto Ortega Saavedra. TT, 28 November 1980, pp. 1, 3.

Mendez was part of a larger group of guerrillas also released at that time; he went to Panama, where he made his statements to the OIJ.

The FAL Belgian-made automatic rifle is a standard weapon used by Latin American guerrillas.

Four months before, the Costa Rican government approved an air bridge for refugees to go from Cuba to the United States by way of Costa Rica. According to Michael Skol (see note 60), however, nearly sixty percent of the incoming refugees were ineligible to go on to the United States—i.e., they had no U.S. family ties. This has left some 5,000 Cubans in Costa Rica, and as a consequence, Costa Ricans have felt a definite ambivalence about the influx.

Among other problems facing President Carazo at this time were increasingly bad relations with the Legislative Assembly, and the beginning of a marked decline in Costa Rica's monetary standard, the colon, on the international market. Shirley Christian, Miami Herald, 20 February 1981.


96 PL, 17 March (p. 1), 21 April (p. 8), 13 (pp. 1, 8), 17 (p. 10) June 1981; LN, 16 June 1981, pp. 6, 8-A. To the consternation of an unbelieving populace, the Costa Rican members proved to be as hard-nosed as any other Latin American terrorists.


103 In an interview, President Carazo explained: "First the weapons were lent to us about two years ago. Last year when the Legislative Assembly [words indistinct—though presumably "appointed"] a special committee to investigate the weapons, it seemed appropriate to keep them." RR 1730 GMT, 22 April 1981, p. 1. As the reader can see, Carazo said nothing about the arms returned in July 1980 nor why any arms were kept even as long as a year later.

104 LN, 21 April 1981, p. 2-A; RR 1200 GMT, 22 April 1981, p. 2; LR, 22 April 1981, p. 8; LR, 1 May 1981, p. 10. The weaponry included 23 75-mm cannons (Chinese); 6 120-mm mortars; 17 82-mm mortars (Russian); 8 4-barrel machine guns with 64 spare barrels; 12 3.5-mm rocket launchers; 2 bazookas; 8 MAG machine guns; and 622 FAL rifles with ammunition. Informe, p. 53. A question also presents itself: Were these the weapons
Azofeifa claimed he had been told not to show investigators months before?

105 _PL_, 22 April 1981, p. 4; _LR_, 22 (p. 8), 24 (p. 8) April 1981. The man referred to was Jorge Brade.


107 _Informe_, pp. 46-57.

108 Neither the Panamanian nor Costa Rican governments gave any indication during the July 1979 arms-return ceremony of how many planes came to retrieve the loaned weapons. This might have given some idea of how many pounds of weapons were returned at that time.


111 Skol lecture, 24 April 1981.

112 Not surprisingly, Don Pepe supported President Carazo's actions during the Nicaraguan conflict—and then went so far as to say that, given the opportunity, he would have imported arms from Libya! _LR_, 2 June 1981, p. 4.

113 No one even publicly suggested impeachment proceedings of Carazo in relation to this issue. But there was one reference to impeachment several weeks before in regard to actions Carazo had taken concerning the economy. _RR_ 0100 GMT, April, p. 1.

114 Costa Rican Const. art. 131, sec. 1.

115 _TT_, 15 May 1981, pp. 1, 4. In quoting the Cuban letter, the _Times_ said that Costa Rica had been "accused of 'servile support for counter-revolutionary maneuvers' and 'unabashed' kowtowing to U.S. interests."

116 Costa Rica's air bridge for Cuban refugees was another factor which had contributed to tension between the two nations (see note 91).

117 Figueres interview, 9 April 1981.
Costa Ricans seem ready for a change in national leadership; a private poll made by the Consultoria Interdisciplinaria en Desarrollo (once affiliated with the U.S. Gallup poll) in May 1981 claimed that only 9 percent of the nation thought President Carazo was doing a good or very good job. LN, 8 May 1981, p. 8-A.
To: Stephen Earley
From: David Holtby, Publications Subcommittee, LAI
Subject: Requested revisions to "Arms Traffic in Costa Rica"

DATE: 5 May 1982

1. The Publications Subcommittee secured three readings of your submission. Based on those reports, two of which are attached for your consideration, it has been approved for publication pending completion of final revisions and retyping. We ask that you complete this work no later than the end of June.

2. Please read and consider the comments on the two attached reader's reports. In addition, the Subcommittee requests that the following revisions be made:

   a. The title is misleading and should be changed to one that better conveys the thrust of the piece. More to the point is "Arms and Politics in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, 1948-1981." You discuss the political ramifications of arms trafficking rather than the details of the shipments and distribution.

   b. You must be consistent in your style. At times you're too casual in tone. This is essentially investigative reporting and you must be both fairly neutral (i.e., get rid of the knee-jerk reactions to the Left) and straightforward.

   c. The numerous typographical errors and spelling mistakes must be eliminated.

3. Attached is the sheet of guidelines for submitting the final typescript. It is to be followed exactly.

4. This piece is quite an accomplished bit of research and writing. The Subcommittee was pleased to see you submit it and believes that it will be one that interests many readers.

5. Contact Sharon Kellum at LAI when you are ready with the final typescript. If you have questions or problems before then, feel free to call me and I'll help you.
AUTHOR: Stephen Earley

TITLE OF ARTICLE: Arms Trafficking in Costa Rica

INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION: UNM (undergrad) 1948-1981

LENGTH: 67 pp. (51 pp. text plus 16 pp. notes)

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY: (i.e., what's the author's purpose and is it achieved)

The author traces the role of Costa Rica in providing arms, directly or indirectly, for rebels in other Central American countries, especially Nicaragua. He especially focuses on the presidency of José Figueres and, later, of Rodrigo Carazo. The approach is more akin to journalism than a social science, with a good dose of reporting, but for good reading, yes, the purpose is accomplished.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF RESEARCH:

Interviews, newspapers, radio broadcasts, other published materials (not interviews in Costa Rica)

CRITIQUE OF ARTICLE (What, if any, revisions would you suggest?):

1. I don't (personally) believe that the title is accurate. I expected to read about specific dealers, not political machinations.

2. Author apparently is unaware of his own biases—he makes some comments about Sandinistas that reveal bias of Marxists. Fine, but I'm not sure he aware of why.

3. A final revision (for publication) could tighten my narrative, so that one doesn't lose track of protagonist.

Prepared by: Reader # 2  Date: 28
The author sets out to explore just why Costa Rica supported the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) with arms during the late seventies. His approach is to reconstruct the personal and national antagonisms between the two countries and their leaders--Figueres and Somoza--and then relate in detail how those animosities led to the arms trafficking of the late 1970s. The piece is a carefully constructed bit of investigative work, one that is quite engrossing in the final section on the arms probe in Costa Rica.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF RESEARCH:

Primary sources of the national media--press, radio, commentaries--as well as the necessary secondary sources. The various legislative reports and the extensive material from the year-long probe of the arms trafficking are carefully used. He's obviously read and digested considerable information, and he's put it all together in a fairly tight and organized way.

CRITIQUE OF ARTICLE (What, if any, revisions would you suggest?):

I have no substantive criticisms, just ones of presentation: the piece needs to be checked for spelling and retyped with care. I believe that the author has a piece here that will interest a number of people, especially because he shows just how complicated the issue of arms trafficking gets when so-called strange bedfellows become involved, as happened in this instance with Cuban support coming to Costa Rica through Venezuela and Panama, probably with the tacit support of the U.S. I think this is a timely topic and the information presented should interest a number of readers.