10-31-1986

Brief Chronology Of Developments Surrounding Trial Of Eugene Hasenfus By Nicaraguan Anti-sonicista Peoples Tribunals

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.
Brief Chronology Of Developments Surrounding Trial Of Eugene Hasenfus By Nicaraguan Anti-somicista Peoples Tribunals

by Deborah Tyroler
Category/Department: General
Published: Friday, October 31, 1986

Oct. 28: Former US Attorney General Griffin Bell told reporters in Managua that the Anti-Somocista Peoples Tribunals had refused his request to meet with Eugene Hasenfus. He added that he felt the refusal to permit a person accused of a serious crime to speak with his attorney was a "moral affront," and particularly when the [Nicaraguan] attorney in charge of his defense speaks a different language. Nicaraguan attorney Enrique Sotelo is in charge of Hasenfus's defense. Bell was contracted by the defendant's relatives, and is effectively performing as a consultant in the case. According to the local Justice Ministry, Bell is not authorized to act as an attorney in Nicaragua. Hasenfus is accused of terrorism, illegal association to commit criminal acts, and violating Nicaraguan security. Bell said he planned to travel to Atlanta on Oct. 29 to review the evidence, and that he would return to Managua on Nov. 3. He said the prohibition to meet with Hasenfus seems to be grounded on a "very peculiar" recourse as articulated by Nicaraguan Justice Minister, Rodrigo Reyes. According to Bell, Reyes maintains that Sotelo is the only authorized legal counsel in the defense of Hasenfus, and that Bell cannot act as a second attorney. Consequently, Bell is not legally authorized to visit Hasenfus. Bell maintained he had never heard of anything of this nature elsewhere, and that he would consult with the Organization of American States (OAS) on whether Nicaragua had violated some international agreement in denying him access to Hasenfus. The former attorney general told reporters that the allegations against Hasenfus were serious ones. He added that while the defendant was "guilty of something," he was not necessarily guilty of what he has been accused of. (AP, 10/28/86, PRENSA LATINA, 10/29/86) Ernesto Palazio, spokesman for the United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO) in Washington, said UNO was willing to negotiate a prisoner exchange with the Sandinista government. He said Griffin Bell could present the offer to the Sandinistas as part of his efforts to free Hasenfus. On Oct. 27, Bell offered to try negotiating another type of exchange, i.e., Hasenfus for 19 Nicaraguans held on drug charges in US prisons. A State Department spokesman did not endorse Griffin's proposal, and declined to comment on whether the Reagan administration would discuss it with Bell. The contra spokesman said the number of Sandinista troops involved in the exchange could be discussed later but that "about 20 men" might be involved. The troops were taken prisoner during military confrontations and are held by the contras in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan government's first reaction to the contra proposal was a simple refusal to discuss the matter. Nicaraguan Embassy spokesman Manuel Cordero said that if the Sandinistas exchange Hasenfus with anybody, it would be accomplished via negotiations with the US government, because Hasenfus is a US citizen and a tool of American policy. Oct. 29: The trial of Eugene Hasenfus by the Anti-Somocista Peoples Tribunals in Managua began. The trial is scheduled to continue for eight days. Created in 1983, the tribunals are separate from ordinary courts in Nicaragua. The Sandinista government has used this special judicial arrangement to try persons accused of assisting the contras and of other political crimes. The maximum penalty handed down by the tribunals is a 30-year prison sentence. Oct. 30: According to a report by Soviet news agency TASS, beginning on Oct. 28, the Nicaraguan Justice Ministry delivered to the Tribunals...
documentary evidence of Hasenfus's ties with the CIA and related material on US involvement in contra supply airlift operations from the Salvadoran Ilopango air base. Included in the evidence is a list of "some 30 American pilots" who had been recruited by the CIA for delivering supplies to contra forces from Ilopango.

-- End --