11-5-1986

Reports On Casualties In Recent Fighting Between Sandinista Army & Contra Forces Near Honduran Border

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Nov. 1: Addressing a youth group in Jinotega department Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega said that uninterrupted fighting took place between Oct. 24 to 29 close to Jinotega. During that time, he said, the contras suffered 80 deaths and 120 wounded, whereas the Sandinista army suffered 21 deaths and 26 wounded. The president stated that the intense fighting was triggered by large-scale invasions by FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Front) forces into Nicaraguan territory. Nov. 2: The Nicaraguan government issued no new reports on the intense fighting near the Honduran border in Jinotega department. Meanwhile, thousands traveled to cemeteries in observance of the Day of the Dead. Although official reports were not available, military sources told journalists that the number of dead and wounded in the last two days could not be determined. The sources told the ASSOCIATED PRESS that casualties were numerous, and that the government expects an "intensification of the war throughout the country." Since President Reagan signed the budget appropriations bill including the $100 million in aid to the contras on Oct. 18, the Nicaraguan government called on the citizenry to maintain a state of military preparedness. Shortly thereafter, military recruitment of youths between 17 and 25 years of age was accelerated, and those between 25 and 40 years of age were called on to enlist in military service. The official newspaper of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), BARRICADA, stated that the "tone of invasion threats" was rising. An account of comments on plans by Washington to more openly support contra military actions by Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams during a press conference in Uruguay was reproduced. Nov. 3: The ASSOCIATED PRESS reported that a spokesperson for the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) said a Sandinista army contingent consisting of 2,000 soldiers had suffered 370 deaths on Friday (Oct. 31) in fighting with FDN forces on Honduran territory. The AP source also said the Sandinistas had sustained hundreds of wounded and that fighting continued in both southern and northern Nicaragua. Meanwhile, a military intelligence spokesperson for the Honduran army affirmed that the Sandinistas were returning to Nicaragua "in the last 20 hours," and that they had concentrated for 36 hours in the Capire mountains. This source reported that a total of 5,000 Sandinista soldiers pursued the FDN into Honduras, and that they were pushed back by the contras. The Honduran military spokesperson added that the Honduran army reinforced its positions in the Capire area to impede deeper incursions into Honduran territory by the contras and the Sandinistas. Before turning back, the Sandinista army had traveled six kilometers into Honduran territory. The FDN reported that fighting had intensified in the northern Nicaraguan department of Matagalpa, the eastern Chontales department, and Nueva Guinea department in southern Nicaragua. Indalecio Rodriguez, one of the seven members of the FDN high command, said that the Nicaraguan regime is applying desperate measures in the face of contra military advances. He said that the rush by the Sandinistas to recruit more men into the army is proof of their desperation. As of Nov. 3, the Honduran army had not yet permitted journalists and civilians to enter the Capire area.