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Senate Memorandum Reveals Evidence Accumulating On Contra Plot To Assassinate Tambs & Blame Sandinistas

by Deborah Tyroler

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According to a memorandum prepared by the staff of Sen. John Kerry, informants have told Senate investigators that in 1985 the contras plotted to kill US Ambassador to Costa Rica Lewis Tambs and blame it on the Sandinistas. Kerry has been involved in investigating the contras in several areas. The memorandum cites several sources as saying they had direct knowledge of the conspiracy to murder Tambs by bombing the US embassy in San Jose. The planned attack was never realized. Although the Senate document has not been released publicly, REUTERS obtained a copy from a non-congressional source. The report indicated that informants said there were two motives behind the plot to kill Tambs: to collect a \$1 million price on his head offered by Colombian drug dealers angered by Tambs' anti-drug projects in Colombia, and to "create a casus belli against the Sandinistas." Tambs was Ambassador to Colombia before arriving in San Jose. The report said, "Initially, Senate staff found this story more bizarre than credible. But significantly, there was additional corroboration for it from a variety of sources associated with the contras...and with other organizations and individuals working with the contras... "Senate staff who have interviewed them believe the testimony they offer should be treated with great respect." Congressional sources told REUTERS the alleged Tambs plot would probably be further investigated this year. Another line of inquiry, said the sources, was what former member of the National Security Council Lt. Col. Oliver North and his previous liaison with the contras, Robert Owen, knew about contra activities. Three informants provided details of the alleged plot against Tambs' life. One is Jesus Garcia, who is currently in a Florida prison for illegal weapons possession he says he obtained for the contras. The Senate report said, "He told Senate staff that he was recruited...for the embassy bombing but declined participation because he was unwilling to kill Americans." According to Garcia, he had been asked to participate in the plot by members of Civilian Military Assistance (CMA), a US private anti-communist organization which has provided aid to the contras. The report said another source, who wished to remain anonymous told investigators he had been recruited by the CMA for the embassy bombing, but declined because CMA was unable to pay his requested fee. This person is reportedly willing to testify before Congress if subpoenaed. A third source was Carlos Rojas, "a Costa Rican who said he had met one of the parties to the conspiracy, one 'David', a contra who wished to leave the conspiracy." Senate investigators said they interviewed Rojas and listened to tapes of his interviews with David, which they believe are authentic. The Senate document said many other sources mercenaries and contra supporters told investigators they had heard about the Tambs plot from those recruited for it. Allegations of a conspiracy against Tambs' life were first heard in 1985 from US freelance journalists, Martha Honey and Tony Avirgan. They were relying on Rojas as their source. (Basic data from Reuters, 01/07/87)

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