

10-23-1987

Nicaragua: Update On Contra Kidnapping Of U.S. Volunteer Paul Fisher

Deborah Tyroler

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

Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Nicaragua: Update On Contra Kidnapping Of U.S. Volunteer Paul Fisher." (1987).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/1022>

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.

Nicaragua: Update On Contra Kidnapping Of U.S. Volunteer Paul Fisher

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, October 23, 1987

On Oct. 17, contras kidnapped Paul Allen Fisher, a 41-year-old computer systems programmer, near Santo Domingo, outside of Juigalpa in Chontales department. Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, and more recently residing in Mill Valley, California, Fisher has been working with Witness for Peace in Nicaragua since April this year. (See "Nicaraguan Contras Kidnap Witness for Peace Volunteer Paul Fisher," CAU 10/21/87.) Witness for Peace is a church-sponsored research group with offices in Washington and Managua. WFP volunteers, many of whom are members of religious groups in the US, are posted in communities throughout Nicaragua. WFP regularly interviews witnesses of contra attacks, and clashes between the Sandinista army and the contras. (WFP can be contacted at P.O. Box 29497, Washington, D.C. 20017.) Highlights of an Oct. 22 newsbrief by WFP appear below. As of Thursday, Oct. 22, Fisher remained in contra hands. On Saturday, Oct. 17, a group of approximately 20 contras kidnapped Fisher from a public bus traveling from Juigalpa to Santo Domingo. WFP spoke with witnesses to the kidnapping in both Santo Domingo and Juigalpa. According to witnesses, the bus left Juigalpa early Saturday morning on its normal run to Santo Domingo. At Llano Largo, 18 miles outside of Juigalpa, a group of contras stopped the vehicle. After everyone was ordered off the bus, two of them searched the vehicle, apparently, according to one witness, looking for food. Two other contras spent 15 minutes checking the identification documents of the passengers, and pulled aside two Nicaraguan men. The contras noticed Fisher's bag and asked who it belonged to. Fisher identified himself, and the contras asked for his identification papers. After inspecting his ID, which says that he works with Witness for Peace, they pulled Fisher aside with the two Nicaraguans. The remaining passengers were taken to a dry stream bed on the other side of the road. The bus driver told WFP that after the ambush the contras returned to where the people were waiting and told them they could go. When they returned to the road, Fisher and the two Nicaraguans were not in sight. On Oct. 21 WFP spoke with a local peasant farmer who claimed to have seen Fisher with the contras on Monday afternoon in an area north of Santo Domingo. Government sources told WFP that late Wednesday the two Nicaraguans kidnapped with Fisher had escaped and are in Santo Domingo. The two men reportedly said that Fisher is being treated fairly well, although he has been forced to carry a backpack for the contras. WFP investigators planned to interview the two men Oct. 22 to confirm the report. At an Oct. 20 press conference in Washington, Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio) said he had been informed by the State Department that Fisher would be released along with two clergymen the contras had abducted on Oct. 11, as soon as a "responsible third party" could be found. The two clerics were released on Oct. 21. (See story this issue.) As of Oct. 22, WFP had received no direct communication from the contras about a third party arrangement. Msgr. Salvador Schlaefter, Bishop of Bluefields, has publicly offered to serve in any way that might lead to Fisher's release. The public bus in which Fisher was traveling was the first of nine civilian vehicles stopped by the contras at Llano Largo on Saturday morning. The contras set up a blockade by placing the trucks and buses across the road. Between 10:30 and 11 a.m., nearly two hours after Fisher and the other two men were taken, two vehicles belonging to the La Libertad Mining Company arrived at the blockade on their way to Juigalpa. The passengers

were armed, result of previous ambushes. As they approached the blockade, the contras opened fire; three armed men and one civilian were killed. At an Oct. 22 press briefing, State Department spokesperson Phyllis Oakley responded to a question about Fisher's welfare by declaring that State had no additional information. She said, "He was detained, we understand, in a remote area of conflict in Nicaragua." According to Oakley, the Department "has advised the Nicaraguan resistance of our hope for Mr. Fisher's safe and early release." She said the contras have indicated that Fisher will be released when it is safe to do so. However, she added, "concentrations of Sandinista troops remain in the general area where Fisher was traveling, and this could delay his safe release."

-- End --