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Seven Indicted For Recruiting & Arming Mercenaries To Fight Nicaraguan Government

by Deborah Tyroler

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On July 13, seven men were indicted in Miami on charges of recruiting and arming mercenaries to fight the Nicaraguan government. According to the seven-count indictment, the men violated the Neutrality Act and federal firearm laws, and provided funding to prepare "military expeditions" against Nicaraguan territory. The Neutrality Act prohibits any action carried out in and from the US against foreign governments with which the US is not at war. The indictment was the first under the Act in connection with the contras. The indictment was handed up by a Grand Jury in Fort Lauderdale on June 28. It was unsealed on July 13, and announced by the US Attorney, Dexter W. Lehtinen. Included among the indicted was contra leader Adolfo Calero's brother, Mario. The other six are Jack Terrell of Washington; Thomas Posey, head of the Alabama-based Civilian Military Assistance, a pro-contra paramilitary group; Joe Adams, a former bodyguard of Adolfo Calero; Maco Stewart, a wealthy Texas state legislator who is said to have financed the mercenary operation; and two Cuban-Americans, Jose Coutin and Alex Martinez, of Miami. With the exception of Coutin, who is serving a seven-year sentence for cocaine possession, the defendants surrendered on July 13, and were freed on \$25,000 bonds. In a statement, Terrell currently a researcher at the International Center for Development Policy, a Washington group opposed to contra aid, said it was "ludicrous that after a two-year investigation fueled by information which I freely provided, the US Attorney's office has chosen to prosecute me, and not a single one of the Reagan administration officials who run our policy in Central America." Terrell told reporters that he has no intention of being Washington's sacrificial lamb. He said he intends to name a high US official to "put US policy on trial." If found guilty. Terrell and Adams could receive prison sentences of up to 33 years. Coutin could go to prison for 13 years. Calero, Martinez, Posey and Stewart could get eight years. (Basic data from Nicaragua Network, 07/15/88; New York Times, 07/14/88)

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