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## **Nicaragua: Government Brings Suit Against Two Union Leaders Charged With Slander**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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In early October, the Nicaraguan government filed a suit in the Common Courts against Confederation for Labor Unity (CUS) leaders, Alvin Guthrie and Jose Espinoza, charging them with injury and slander. On Oct. 26, the two men were found guilty, and ordered to pay fines of 37,500 cordobas each (about \$117 at the official exchange rate, or \$37.50 at the legal parallel rate, as of Oct. 31). The government's claim derived from what were described as distortions of events surrounding a shooting incident in early October. The incident took place during a robbery in a bar in Quezalguaque, Leon department. Three persons were shot to death. Guthrie and Espinoza charged in the pages of opposition daily La Prensa that the government was responsible for the murders. Other inaccurate claims, according to charges filed by the government, were the two men's statements that the murder victims were members of CUS and had previously received death threats. Relatives of the deceased reportedly testified that CUS leaders had offered them monthly payments of money and foodstuffs if they would agree to declaring that the decedents had received death threats and were members of CUS. In statements to foreign journalists, Guthrie denied that he was trying to bribe the relatives, and that he was only offering normal benefits any CUS member's family is entitled to in the event of death. (Basic data from 10/31/88 report by Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research of Central America and the Caribbean-CRIES, Managua)

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