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Contra Military Commander Assassinated In Honduras

by Deborah Tyroler

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On the evening of Jan. 7, contra commander Manuel Adan Rugama Acevedo, alias Commander Aureliano, was shot to death when the jeep he was driving was halted by gunmen on a highway north of Tegucigalpa. Rugama Acevedo was secretary of the contra army's board of commanders. Police said they had no suspects in the killing. Contra spokespersons in Tegucigalpa and Miami blamed the Nicaraguan government and rejected the possibility that the killing was the result of an internal dispute. Unnamed sources in Tegucigalpa told the AFP that Rugama was the target of dissidents who last year rebelled against the leaders of the contra camps in Honduras. Rugama, 38, was the second-highest ranking military leader of the Nicaraguan Resistance. Rugama, a medical doctor, whose legal residence was listed in his passport as San Francisco, California, also supervised contra hospitals in Honduras. He was promoted to chief contra military commander after then-military chief Enrique Bermudez assumed presidency of the Nicaraguan Resistance in June 1988. Rugama was at the center of controversy when another contra leader, known as Commander Mercenario, accused him of selling arms to the Salvadoran rebels. On Jan. 8, Rugama's body was taken to San Francisco. (Basic data from AFP, 01/08/89; New York Times, 01/09/89)

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