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Deborah Tyroler

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Nicaraguan Embassy Personnel Accused Of Planning Assassination Of Contra Military Leader

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Feb. 6, two presumed accomplices in the Jan. 7 assassination of contra military leader Manuel Rugama ("Aureliano") told reporters at a news conference organized by the Honduran armed forces press office in Tegucigalpa that the Nicaraguan Embassy was responsible for the crime. Honduran Juan Bautista Nunez Amador and Nicaraguan Luis Fernando Ordonez Reyes said Rugama's murder was masterminded by the embassy's security chief, Jose de Jesus Pena. In Managua, Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry spokesperson David Silva categorically denied Embassy involvement. According to Silva, the Embassy in Tegucigalpa has no one on staff "who answers to that name." Ordonez, who has resided in Honduras for the past nine years, has a currency exchange business in downtown Tegucigalpa. He said he had served as a double agent, providing information to Pena and assistance to the contras. Ordonez said that beginning eight months ago, he received between 1,000 and 2,000 lempiras (between \$500 and \$1,000) per month from Pena for information on contra activities and US aid to the same. Nunez Amador, who was employed by Ordonez, reportedly took the first shot at Rugama. The contra chief, ambushed on a highway on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa, was shot more than 25 times. Both men said they had been hired by Pena to kill Rugama. (Basic data from AP, AFP, 02/06/89)

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