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Oliver North Urged Nicaraguan Contras To Launch Suicide Raid At Managua Airport In 1984

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Feb. 24, Robert Owen testified that former National Security Council staff member, Oliver North, had urged Nicaraguan contras to launch a suicide raid against Soviet-made Hind helicopters at a Managua airport in 1984. Owen, a witness for the prosecution, said that North had given him US intelligence maps and photographs of the airfield to carry to contra leader Alfredo Calero in November 1984. Owen, a former aide to Vice President Dan Quayle, said North suggested that contra pilots participate in a suicide mission to destroy the copters before they could be assembled and used against contra forces. Owen stated that he had explained North's plan to Calero at a meeting in Honduras about a month after the congressional ban on US aid to the contras went into effect. Owen said North feared the armored helicopters "would decimate" the contra army. According to Owen, Calero "didn't make a commitment one way or the other." North's trial began on Feb. 20, on 12 charges related to his assistance for the contras, and the 1985-86 arms-for-hostages deal with Iran which generated some of the financing provided to the contras. (Basic data from AFP, 02/24/89)

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