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Bush Administration Okays Sale Of Military Aircraft To Guatemala

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, April 7, 1989

Early this year, the Bush administration authorized the sale of an A-37B military plane to the Guatemalan military despite a congressional ban on "lethal" aid to Guatemala. The aircraft's price tag, $142,673, was below cost. According to an aide to Rep. Bob Mrazek (D-NY), the sale is "essentially a giveaway." The US military claimed the plane was recently damaged. In November, the Reagan administration arranged a "private" sale by Colt Industries of 16,000 M-16 assault rifles to the Guatemalan military. According to Bob Stix of the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA), "The M-16 and A-37B sales signify an important shift in US strategy toward Guatemala. The Reagan and Bush administrations are attempting to bring Guatemala back into the fold of mainstream US objectives for Central America...These sales are designed to open the door to future US military aid. They smooth the way for the Bush administration to use US tax dollars the next time to send US weapons to Guatemala." Stix said that late last year 40 US military trainers from Fort Bragg, NC, were dispatched to Guatemala for training exercises with that country's special counterinsurgency troops. "Washington is constantly testing Congress by trying to establish closer ties with the Guatemalan military, and the problem is no one [on Capitol Hill] makes a stink about it," says Stix. (Basic data from Guardian, 02/08/89, summarized by Central America Resource Center, Minneapolis, Minn.)

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