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Nicaragua: President Ortega Avoids Contra Ambush

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Jan. 20, President Daniel Ortega was scheduled to deliver a speech at a campaign rally in the town of San Juan de Rio Coco, located in the Segovia mountains near the Honduran border. After participating in a rally organized by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in Quilali, Ortega and his entourage were informed by local army officers that about 800 contras had been detected skulking about in the terrain between Quilali and San Juan. The president insisted that he and the others would continue on to San Juan so as not to disappoint local residents and FSLN party activists. According to the El Nuevo Diario newspaper, when Ortega's caravan of vehicles approached the site where military intelligence said a contra unit was preparing for an ambush, Ortega grabbed a rifle and jumped out of the vehicle, and ordered his companions to do the same. The newspaper said that because the element of surprise had been lost, the contra unit dropped its plans for the ambush. During his speech at the rally in San Juan, Ortega said President Bush would be responsible for any ambush that he or his companions are subjected to. (Basic data from Notimex, 01/21/90)

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