
Defense Report

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Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters — Rebels With a Just Cause

Our Congress may have unwittingly performed a great service to the cause of freedom by holding the recently-concluded Iran-Contra hearings on national television. Until that time, the plight of the Nicaraguan freedom fighters was the farthest thing from the minds of most Americans. When Lt. Col. Oliver North was permitted to fleetingly summarize his Central America briefing on camera, many millions here were made aware for the first time that a peasant insurgency was fighting tenaciously against the communist dictatorship in Managua.

In 1979, when a coalition of national forces got together to overthrow Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, it was basically a battle of democracy against dictatorship. The Sandinista faction of that coalition numbered around 3000 at the time. Immediately upon Somoza's ouster, the communist Sandinistas seized control of the coalition and prevented the establishment of representative government based on individual freedom and liberty. Instead, they imposed their own dictatorship of the left for the earlier dictatorship of the right.

In less than eight years, the Communists have enslaved Nicaragua just as Castro enslaved Cuba. They have eradicated any semblance of basic human rights and democratic freedoms, shutting down reputable press institutions and trying to prevent church leaders from speaking to their parishioners. They replaced Somoza's two prisons with eleven of their own, each one constructed on the model of the Soviet gulag, and they have crammed them all with political prisoners.

As North clearly related, this repression of freedom and human dignity has driven thousands of Nicaraguans to open opposition of the Cuban-schooled, Soviet-equipped regime in Managua. Today Nicaragua's freedom fighters, variously estimated to number from 11,000 to 18,000, are in the fifth year of a struggle to liberate their small and impoverished land.

Now that the American public has become better informed of their true cause, is it too much to hope that our representatives in Washington might be better disposed to supporting Nicaraguans who believe it possible to prevent a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship on the North American mainland and are willing to fight to prevent it?