

# Failed Contra policy comes under fire

by Gretchen Small

While top administration officials, including President Reagan himself, insist that the United States remains committed to its failed Contra policy in Central America, a rebellion is brewing in U.S. military ranks against continuing a policy which has been, by any criteria one cares to choose, an unmitigated disaster.

General Paul Gorman, former chief of the U.S. Southern Command, surprised a Senate committee Jan. 28, when he demanded that the United States go back to square one on its Central American policy. The general's answers to Senate questioning after his testimony shook Washington. "We have to overhaul the entire Contra policy, and put in place an apparatus capable of conducting a long-term fight, or else quit now," Gorman stated. "The Contras as presently constituted are only a cross-border raiding force, of no concern to the Sandinistas. The Sandinistas know that the jungle is irrelevant . . . they don't care who controls it." He ridiculed U.S. intelligence on Nicaragua. "There is no way to make a military assessment of the effect of military operations within Nicaragua, because we do not have any intelligence."

Gorman astounded the senators by stating his support for the Contadora countries and the approach they have used. "The core four (Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and El Salvador) are the key, but the efforts of Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Panama have helped to forge a consensus among the countries in the region," he testified. What is needed is for the United States to build up its allies in the region, particularly Costa Rica and Honduras. "We need to do . . . technology transfer to the militaries of the region, to make them independent," he argued, citing as examples such basics as the technology to produce a "boot sole which can withstand the volcanic rock," or for food packaging "so the military can carry C-rations" on its marches.

Gorman stressed the need to build up infrastructure in the region, giving examples of ways the United States can assist its neighbors. "We need to develop a replacement airplane for the C-47. . . . This plane is the lifeblood of the political and administrative apparatus of the governments in the region, and they are being held together with bailing wire. If we developed a replacement, this would convince these governments that we intend to stick around. . . . The area is in desperate need of roads. . . . These things are more impor-

tant than helicopters."

Asked later by *EIR* to comment on the opposition of Assistant Secretary for Interamerican Affairs Elliott Abrams to an economic development strategy for the region, the general answered: "Read my testimony, I disagree with him. . . . We should be in the road building business in Central America."

## Dope-runners vs. nation building

What broke the conspiracy of silence surrounding the Contra fiasco, is the Contras' involvement in the Soviet-dominated narcotics traffic in the Western Hemisphere. Even Secretary of State George Shultz did not dare deny it outright, before the House Budget Committee on Jan. 28. "I don't want to say that there has been no instance in which anybody involved with [the Contras] has ever had any contact [with drug trafficking]," Shultz hedged. But for him, "whatever problem there is, is quite under control."

Revelations on the Contras' drug connections have exposed some old skeletons in the U.S. intelligence community's closet. A Jan. 16 article in the *Wall Street Journal* reported on Cuban-American drug-runners and terrorists' role in advising the Contras. Long before the Iran-Contras scandal broke, U.S. military officials expressed in private their concern over penetration by Castro's intelligence service, the DGI, of Brigade 2506, the Cuban-American group which participated in the Bay of Pigs, and was reactivated by the CIA to aid the Contras.

Now that concern has been made public. Exposed in the *Journal's* article is how drug-running contaminates Brigade 2506 as a whole. The Brigade functions as an "old-boy network of Cubans . . . based in Miami and stretch[ing] across Central America," the *Journal* notes. Its members "range from colonels to convicted drug-smugglers," who function on the basis of "fierce loyalty" to one another. "We all keep in touch. . . . We love each other," Eugenio Rolando Martínez, a Brigade member who participated in the Watergate burglary, told the *Journal*. Jose Basulto, a close friend of Felix Rodríguez, the Brigade member in charge of a CIA counterinsurgency program and Contra resupply operation in El Salvador, told the *Journal* that he, too, would gladly give "an *abrazo*" to another Brigade member, whom he freely acknowledged is a major drug-trafficker.

## Dope-runners before allies?

As news of the Contra drug connection weakens U.S. credibility on every front, the pressure for a full-scale review of the entire Contra policy has mounted. Nervous Contra supporters in the administration demanded a demonstration of commitment to the Contras. They won that round, when on Jan. 23, National Security Adviser Frank Carlucci, NSC Latin American adviser Jorge Sorzano, and the loudmouthed Assistant Secretary of State for Interamerican Affairs, Elliott

Abrams, called a meeting at the White House of "private" supporters of the Contras.

A gung-ho campaign on the Contras' behalf was proclaimed by all. Abrams went further, launching into a tirade against any U.S. ally opposing the suicidal strategy of building up Nicaraguan Contra drug-runners, labeling such opposition "Communist." He denounced the policies of the eight leading countries which make up Contadora and its support group (Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Peru). The United States "is opposed to fake negotiations, and that's the problem we've had with Contadora," he said. The Contadora Group "has tended to be led from the left," he charged, singling out Mexico and Peru as the most "vociferous and most influential" leaders in this regard.

Mexico took the brunt of his attack. Secretary of State Shultz will lecture Mexican Foreign Minister Bernardo Sepúlveda when they meet Jan. 29-30, Abrams announced, that Mexico's advocacy of a negotiated solution in Central America "serves neither our interests nor Mexico's interests." Sepúlveda will be in Washington for the Sixth Binational U.S.-Mexican Meeting.

Abrams, who has urged Ibero-America's own military capabilities be torn down, threatened that, either the nations of the region support the Contras, or the United States will invade. "There is only one power in the Western Hemisphere which can keep peace in Central America, and that is ourselves. This is the path which will be followed if the Contras are abandoned," he said.

Meanwhile, other loudmouths joined his "war on Mexico" campaign. Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), who spent last year demanding that the United States back a bunch of Panamanian and Mexican drug-runners, has ordered the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to prepare an "in-depth study" denouncing Mexico's policies in Central America, Mexico's *Excelsior* reported Jan. 25. Background press briefings by U.S. officials pumped the line that the United States is "deeply suspicious" of Contadora's actions, and views Mexico with "great displeasure."

The Contadora Group had provoked Abrams's rage by sending a delegation of its foreign ministers to Central America the week of Jan. 19, to sound out new possibilities for securing stability in the region. Contadora has repeatedly urged the United States to stop arming another band of terrorists in the region, and instead help strengthen U.S. allies, so that they can defend themselves against any domestic or foreign threat.

At the end of this trip, Contadora members issued a statement promising to "maintain" a dialogue with the United States, "whose contribution is necessary to reach a peaceful solution" in Central America, but slammed "the persistence of acts that violate international law," by both the United States and the Soviet-allied Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

"No visible progress" toward ending conflict in Central America was achieved by the foreign ministers' visit, the *Washington Post* reported, but called this "an apparent victory for U.S. diplomacy!"

### Fire Abrams!

U.S. allies in Ibero-America are in an uproar, particularly in Mexico, where Abrams's abusive remarks became banner headlines. The response was summarized best by Mexico's former ambassador to Washington, Sen. Hugo Margain, who told the press, the United States is "morally disqualified" to question any party's search for peace in Central America.

"Elliott Abrams is nothing more than an arms-trafficker," columnist Gaston García Cantu charged in a front-page article in *Excelsior* Jan. 26. "He has neither the moral, political, or intellectual condition to speak contemptuously about anyone, never mind our country's foreign policy. An arms-trafficker is a criminal." President Reagan is acting like Teddy Roosevelt, Cantu added. No American President is hated more in Ibero-America than Teddy "Gunboat" Roosevelt.

Abrams's attempt to split the Contadora Group provoked disgust in other countries. Abrams has "verbal incontinence," commented Venezuelan Foreign Minister Simon Alberto Consalvi. "All the ministers both of Contadora and the Contadora support group fully agree on all the proposals we have formulated for peace and the negotiating process in Central America. There is no way to discriminate among them."

U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, intervened into the brewing crisis. The immediate dismissal of Elliott Abrams is "indispensable to regain some degree of credibility for the United States in Central and South America," LaRouche urged in an interview with New Solidarity International Press Service on Jan. 25. "Abrams's behavior toward the nations of Central and South America has been consistently outrageous."

His retention in office "will be construed as the administration's commitment to failed economic and political strategies" in intra-hemispheric relations. "We must have a 'Chapter 11'-style reorganization of the indebtedness of Central and South America now, or we shall face the fall of many 'Saigons' throughout the hemisphere," he warned. "That senile parody of Bay of Pigs policy, U.S. support for the drug-linked 'Contras,' is to be seen as a foolish, desperate gamble, a self-deluded effort to pretend that there is nothing wrong with our present policies in this region, excepting the existence of the Cuba-linked government of Nicaragua.

"The entirety of present policy toward the region is one blunder piled atop another," the candidate noted. "It is astonishing that the Soviet press does not restrict coverage of current U.S. Central America policy to the pages of the humor magazine, *Krokodil*. Abrams is the essence of that pattern of policy blunders."