US Strategic Options in Nicaragua

ALDEN M. CUNNINGHAM

The Sandinistas are not harmless. They pose a clear threat to US interest in the creation of a stable environment for democratic and socio-economic development in Central America. And they continue to be confident of ultimate triumph in two wars: the present war against the insurgents and the prospective one they most fear—an invasion by the United States.

The Sandinistas are Marxist-Leninists closely tied to the Soviet Union, Cuba, and the East bloc. Their military power is at least comparable to that of all the other Central American countries combined. They have gained a seductive revolutionary image by naming their movement after Augusto Sandino, an anti-US, nationalist Nicaraguan hero of the 1920s and 1930s, and by adapting to modern-day geopolitical realities. Yet they fit well the mold of Latin American revolutionary movements; their roots lie in a history of political violence, a Marxist subculture, Castro's example, and a powerful, visceral hatred of the United States.[1]

The principal pillars upon which the Sandinistas' power rests are stronger than ever. The Popular Sandinista Army has improved steadily in the last three years, especially in its capacity to wage a counterinsurgent war. The state security apparatus is widely recognized as streamlined, efficient, and "on a roll" in terms of controlling and eliminating pro-resistance support and the internal opposition. And Soviet and East Bloc military and economic support continues. Military and military-associated cargo deliveries broke previous highs in 1986, making it a banner year, with roughly 23,000 metric tons provided. Substantial deliveries continued in 1987. Some two to three thousand Cuban military advisers assist in planning and training for both wars at all command levels from army headquarters down to battalion.[2]

Another reason for Sandinista confidence is the increasing fragility of the US bipartisan consensus forged in June 1986 to provide direct military and humanitarian assistance to the Nicaraguan resistance. The ongoing Arias-initiated peace process has influenced the US Congress to suspend all but humanitarian supplies to the resistance, thus buying the Sandinistas more time and increasingly, as the months pass, affecting resistance capability to conduct aggressive guerrilla operations.

Sandinista Strategy—Defeat the Intervention Before It Occurs

The Sandinista's strategic objective is to endure—to consolidate as completely as possible their political and ideological hold on Nicaragua. They are using a combination of military, political, diplomatic, psychosocial, and economic devices and resources to achieve their goal.[3]

The Sandinistas must focus on both wars—an ongoing counterinsurgent war and a potential conventional conflict, phasing into an irregular war, in the event of a US military intervention. While the Sandinistas publicly declare that a US invasion is more likely as a result of resistance weakness, they understand that their army's success in the counterinsurgent war makes a US invasion less likely because the rebels would have failed to develop sufficient legitimacy to make the political costs of an invasion acceptable to the United States.

In the counterinsurgency effort now being waged in the mountains of northern Nicaragua, the marshes and jungles of Zelaya province (which constitutes virtually the entire eastern half of the country), and the hills 50 to 100 miles east of Managua, the army's strategy is to defend as far forward as possible. The idea is to make the rebels fight their way into Nicaragua, giving them no rest in Nicaragua itself or, for that matter, in their base camps. The strategy is to make it difficult for the resistance to mass effectively around important political, military, and economic targets.

The army took advantage of the two-year hiatus in US government military support from September 1984 to October 1986 to make major improvements in their force capability. The army's counterinsurgent force, some 35,000 to 45,000 strong, has improved considerably with the formation of 13-plus irregular warfare battalions, 12-plus light hunter battalions, and 5000 frontier guard troops. The irregulars operate from home

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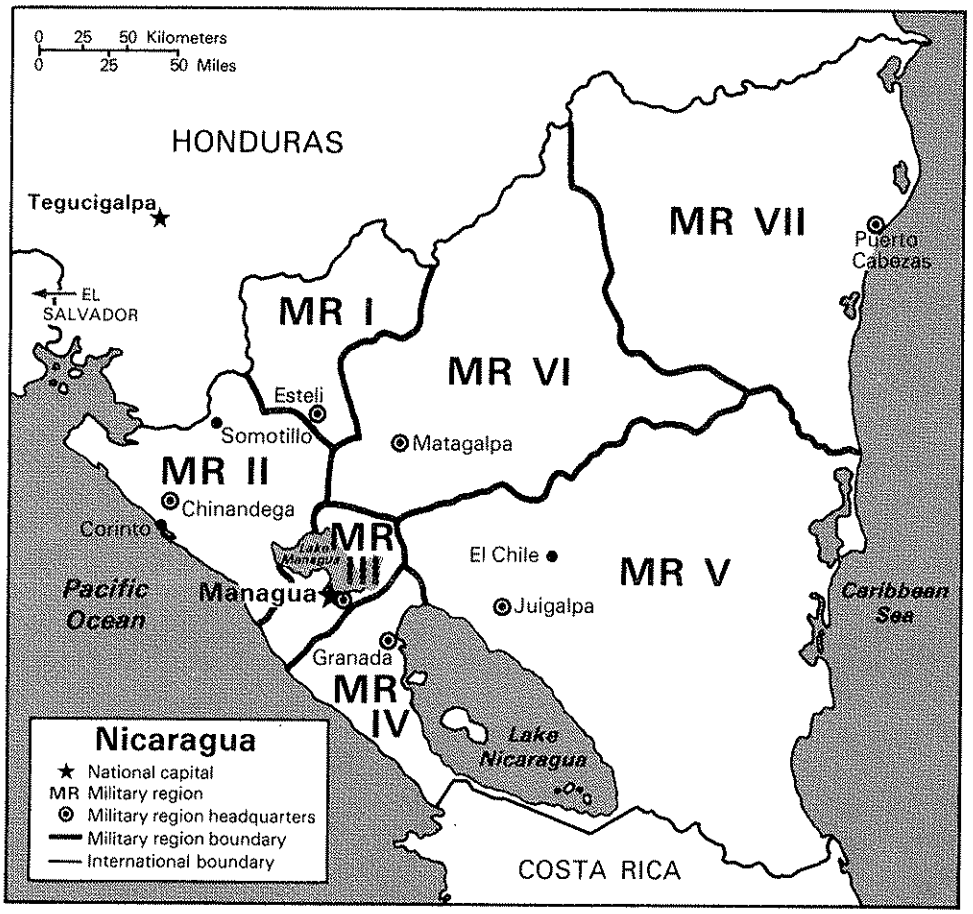
Colonel Alden M. Cunningham was US Defense and Army Attaché in Managua, Nicaragua, from May 1985 to December 1986. He is now a faculty member with the Department of National Security and Strategy, US Army War College, where he was Director of Americas Studies in 1983-85. He is a graduate of the US Military Academy and holds master's degrees in Spanish and Latin American Studies from Middlebury College and New York University. He is also a 1984 graduate of the US Army War College and formerly served on the Department of the Army Staff and as Assistant Army Attaché in Mexico.



Map by Jim Kistler, USAWC

base areas but can be sent anywhere in the national territory. With some 200 to 300 men each, the hunter battalions have probably half as many troops as those of the irregulars and are more lightly armed. They usually are assigned to a specific infantry brigade and thus have a more limited operational area to cover. The frontier guards, as their name implies, patrol the borders and try to pick up rebel forces as far forward as possible, although they may be used more deeply inside the national territory if the situation warrants.

Command and control has also improved with increasing use of infantry brigade headquarters to direct the principal battles. The chain of command runs from army headquarters in Managua to the military region commands in the war zone and down to the brigades. The brigades also control reserve and militia battalions and permanent territorial companies which have a static mission in defense of state farms, towns, bridges, and lines of communication.

Army firepower and mobility have also made progress over the last two years. With the approximate doubling of the helicopter force from six

HIND attack helicopters and 15 HIP assault transport helicopters to 10-12 HINDs and 35 HIPs and the addition of between 1000 and 2000 trucks in 1986-1987 alone, the Sandinista armed forces have gained increased mobility in the counterinsurgency war as well as in preparation for the conventional defense of the Pacific Coast and Managua. Increased numbers of air defense weapons, primarily ZU-23 and S-60 57mm towed antiaircraft guns, have improved conventional air defense capabilities, but in the counterinsurgent war did not have much, if any, success against resistance aerial resupply in 1987. Rumors of introduction of SA-3 surface-to-air missile systems and other missiles such as the SA-9 and SA-14 have been denied by high-ranking army officers. The use of women in air defense units, as shown at the SUBTIAVA 86 exercises in Military Region II near Somotillo along the Honduran border, also points to maximum use of personnel resources.[4] Increased reliance on and better use of field artillery, especially the BM-21 multiple-launch rocket system, have also helped the Sandinistas on the battlefield.

Sandinista use of intelligence is excellent. Through traditional reconnaissance, infiltration of resistance ranks, and strategic and tactical signal intercepts, the army generally has a good idea of guerrilla plans, intentions, and targets, to include the location and timing of aerial resupply of guerrilla forces inside Nicaragua.

Nevertheless, as of this writing, the resistance—numbering roughly 18,000 men and women organized into three separate fronts—is beginning to come together as a political and a military entity. The army has not succeeded in neutralizing them, and the resistance, consistent with logistical support flows, continues to harass government forces and is beginning to attack increasingly important economic and military targets. Guerrilla operations in 1987 created a major strain on Sandinista attention and resources, as evidenced by the very successful pre-Christmas 1987 resistance attack on the mining towns of Siuna, Rosita, and Bonanza in western Military Region VII.

Sandinista Conventional Defense

With respect to the conventional defense of the Pacific Coast and Managua, the army has developed a "People's War" concept which relies heavily on the use of regular forces backed up by large reserves. In October 1985, the army converted the voluntary reserve system into a mandatory approach encompassing conscripts from the 25-to-40-year age group. There were at least 18 reserve light infantry brigades represented at the parade on 8 November 1986 marking the 25th anniversary of the founding of the *Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional* (FSLN) movement. Conservatively, there are probably 22,000 reservists organized and trained to defend the Pacific Coast and Managua (Military Regions II, III, and IV). There may be

considerably more reservists, but many of these forces are not highly motivated and receive only two weeks of training a year. Officers and NCOs supposedly train for longer periods of at least one month per year. Permanent forces would probably add another 10,000 to 20,000 tankers, mechanized infantry, artillerymen, and air defenders (along with appropriate support contingents and air and naval units) as the structure around which the reserve light infantry units would coalesce.

Local militia forces form the final component of the conventional defense concept. There may be some 40,000 militia organized to add depth to the battlefield, thus in theory requiring any invading US forces to fight for every square inch of Nicaraguan territory. The general plan would be to fight conventionally as long as possible, then fade into a guerrilla war, harassing occupying forces at every opportunity. Future plans call for a near-term doubling of this force to 80,000 organized into 100 battalions. Long-term plans somewhat unrealistically call for an additional 324,000 men by 1995.[5]

Without Soviet, East bloc, and Cuban military advisers and materiel support, the army would be far less effective in the conduct of the counterinsurgency and in their preparations to counter a US military intervention. The number of Cuban advisers remains high when compared with the US military advisory effort in El Salvador. By the Sandinista's own count, there are 500 purely military Cuban advisers in Nicaragua. The United States says there are far more, citing a figure of around 3000.[6] And, as noted earlier, Soviet and East bloc materiel support reached record levels in 1986-1987. It is unrealistic to expect that if resistance pressure increases, Soviet support will decrease—in fact, the opposite is more likely. When the US House of Representatives reversed itself and passed the $100 million aid package in June 1986, Soviet merchant ships delivered 8000 to 10,000 metric tons of supplies, including HIP and HIND helicopters, through the Port of Corinto in a four-month period from July to October 1986. Additional helicopter deliveries arrived in 1987 and more are expected in 1988 to replace helicopters shot down by the resistance.

The Ministry of Interior's General Directorate of State Security plays a crucial role in controlling insurgency. The security directorate effectively separated the resistance from the people through relocation of *campesinos* supportive of the guerrillas and through repression involving the arrests of thousands of Nicaraguans. Often those arrested remain detained for relatively short periods of time, but they get the message. Roughly half those arrested remain in special jails for periods ranging from several months to over a year. For example, 70 inhabitants, the entire population of a small town near El Chile in Military Region V, were arrested in the fall of 1986. The men were sent to "El Modelo" prison on the eastern outskirts of Managua, while the women were detained in the security directorate's

operations offices in Juigalpa, some 132 kilometers east of Managua. The charge was that the villagers had provided cattle to resistance forces in January 1986.

The security directorate tracks and periodically harasses internal opposition leadership of the church, private sector, independent labor unions, and political parties. Despite heroic efforts, these opposition groups are largely ineffective in opposing the Sandinista government. Suppression of all civil liberties in October 1985 gave the security directorate the necessary legal power to take any steps it deems necessary to protect the state, such as closing the Catholic radio station, barring Monsignor Carballo, head of the radio station, from returning to Nicaragua in June 1986, and forcibly removing Bishop Vega from Nicaragua in July 1986. As a result of the Arias peace plan, Father Carballo was allowed to return to Nicaragua and reopen the Catholic radio station, but Bishop Vega's status remains unchanged. In the event of a US invasion, the security directorate has lists of Nicaraguans who would be immediately killed as collaborators.

In a military and security sense, the Sandinistas have made progress. General Humberto Ortega, Sandinista Defense Minister, paraphrasing the famous Chinese strategist Sun Tzu, has observed that the greatest general is the one who wins without fighting. The Sandinistas' principal pillars of power—the army, the security directorate, and Soviet support—give them an excellent chance to do just that.

US Strategic Options

Among the options the United States might want to consider in dealing with the Nicaraguan situation are the following:

- *The No-War Option.* The United States would support a combined Arias (Esquipulas II) and Contadora solution[7] which allows the Sandinistas to survive, perhaps along lines similar to a combined Yugoslavian-Mexican model. The focus would be upon achieving bona fide nonalignment. The political opposition within Nicaragua would be protected and US and regional security concerns would be met. In a fashion comparable to the bilateral nonaggression agreement offered Nicaragua by the United States in 1981, the United States might negotiate a separate and parallel security treaty with the Sandinistas which would require bipartisan US government approval and which would provide a basis for US action if the treaty were violated or if good-faith agreement on the treaty could not be achieved.[8] The United States would also commit itself to supporting socioeconomic development and to building stronger democratic governments in the states on Nicaragua's periphery.
- *The Long-War Option.* The United States would settle down patiently for the long haul, providing long-term, reliable, substantial, and effective support to the insurgents. Actual US force involvement would not

be resorted to except under certain high-threat provocations such as those specifically detailed in press reports of the US diplomatic message delivered to the Sandinistas on 18 July 1985.[9]

• *The Short-War Option.* The United States would provide elevated levels of military and political support to the insurgents, using their movement as a legitimacy builder. At the appropriate time, the United States would recognize the movement as the legitimate heir to the revolution and support it by massive and decisive force.

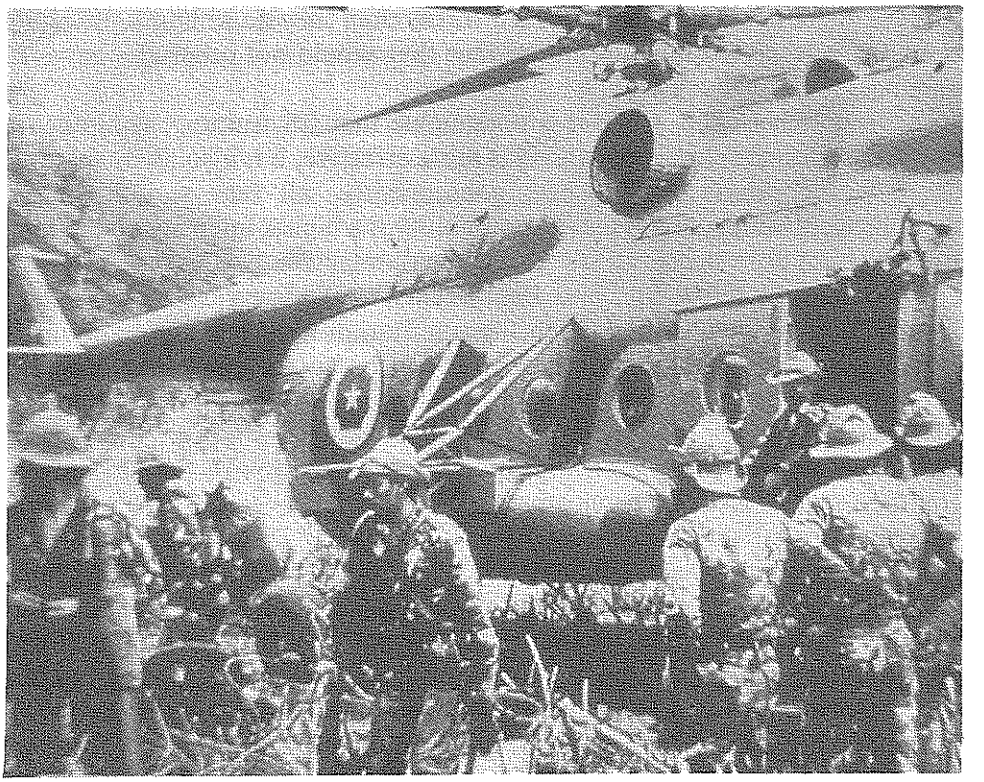
To determine which of the three options holds most promise, let us start with three assumptions. First, the guerrillas cannot defeat the Sandinistas if left alone on the battlefield, regardless of what the United States provides in materiel, training, and advice. Second, no amount of negotiations or military pressure (short of a military defeat) will cause the Sandinistas to become democratic, i.e. they will not give up their internal revolutionary/ideological agenda. Third, there is no appreciable support in the United States for a military intervention in Nicaragua, nor is there likely to be in the foreseeable future.

If the above assumptions are correct, one is left with the no-war option. Are these assumptions valid?

Few would dispute the third assumption that there is little public support for direct US military intervention. Public opinion polls conducted by the media over the past two years tend to show that most people do not want to see US forces involved in Nicaragua. They simply cannot conceive of a country of only three million people as a threat to US interests. Elliot Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, put it well in testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations: "No one in the Administration is advocating [direct US military intervention] and no one of you or the American public would wish us to."[10] The US military leadership also has no desire to get involved in Nicaragua with US combat forces, in large part precisely because of the lack of public support for American troop involvement in the Third World.[11]

The second assumption appears valid considering Sandinista behavior to date. Numerous public pronouncements by Sandinista officials, the disappointing results of US-Nicaraguan negotiations at Manzanillo, Mexico, in 1984, and the tenacity of the Sandinista armed struggle from 1961 to 1979 all point to continued implacable Sandinista resistance to any significant changes in ideological orientation and internal political structures that might weaken FSLN control.

The first assumption can, of course, be challenged. Those disposed to believe in the prospects for guerrilla success on the battlefield note the existence of an increasingly well-organized guerrilla force and foresee it gaining even greater capabilities. A focused strategy would allow the rebels a chance to strike significant blows against the Sandinista army and security



Sandinista troops exit Soviet-supplied HIP assault transport helicopter.

directorate and perhaps even against the Soviet and Cuban presence in Nicaragua—that is, against the principal pillars of Sandinista support. They also believe that reported high army desertion rates reflect low army morale, which might be shattered with greater rebel capability and battlefield successes to the point where whole units might desert. The Sandinistas would then be forced to moderate their regime or flee.

Nevertheless, while desertion rates may be relatively high, many deserters are found and returned to their units. The Sandinistas have also shown that they can demobilize troops and recruit new ones, thus maintaining their force levels. As a function of leadership, morale in some units may be low, but in other units it is high, based upon reports to me by friends who have accompanied Sandinista units in the field and my own discussions with Sandinista soldiers. GI Bill-type benefits recently announced by the Sandinistas for active-duty soldiers completing two years of mandatory service should help morale. Finally, patriotic military service is viewed with progressively less fear as potential recruits see their predecessors demobilized. The war is obviously no picnic, but most survive it. Many of

these soldiers live better in the armed forces than they do at home. Being in the army also gives many an importance they would not otherwise have. It enhances their macho image.

Furthermore, while it is undeniable that US training, equipment, and advisers are making the guerrillas more effective, it is also likely that the army will continue to improve; consequently, all that would be accomplished by improved resistance capability is a higher intensity and tempo to the war on both sides, but still a continued stalemate.

Arturo Cruz, Jr., and Penn Kemble take the view that popular insurrection is not possible, given the totalitarian nature of the Sandinista system, and that a US invasion is not possible because of almost zero public support. They recommend a long-war strategy, seeing it as having a chance of success given the supposed unreliability of Soviet support, the almost paralyzed state of the Nicaraguan economy, the erosion of public support for the Sandinistas within Nicaragua, and the improved circumstances of guerrilla forces.[12]

However, the feasibility of a long war as portrayed by Cruz and Kemble is perhaps overstated. First of all, while neither the Soviets nor the Cubans will send combat troops to Nicaragua, they will not abandon the Sandinistas in the current crisis situation. If they did, Soviet prestige within the socialist world would be badly damaged. While recent signs involving possible cutbacks in Russian oil deliveries indicate that there are limits to Soviet economic support,[13] the Soviets and Cubans are actually increasing their military support to offset US direct aid to the resistance.

Second, the idea that Nicaragua's disastrous economic condition will somehow polarize the people against the Sandinistas is only partially correct. Yes, the people are unhappy with the deteriorating state of the economy and generally blame the regime. This does not mean, however, that in a country like Nicaragua, with its tropical climate and agricultural potential, the people will freeze or starve to death. So far the food shortages have not been followed by health-threatening absence of basic food commodities. There is always something to eat in Nicaragua, and Nicaraguans are increasingly engaging in the illegal underground economy to help make ends meet.[14] Many are also engaging in a growing barter economy. Nevertheless, Cruz and Kemble are correct that the resistance should try to place the blame for Nicaragua's increasing poverty on the Sandinistas.

Third, it is also true that public support for the Sandinistas has eroded. Still, considering the efficiency of the security directorate, combined with public fear and apathy, it will be very difficult to galvanize the Nicaraguan population to act against the Sandinistas. They will need to see a fuller and more persuasive communication of the rebel political agenda or they may continue to view them as portraying "the bad old past." Most important, they will need to see concrete and continuous Contra military

success before they commit themselves. This effort must go beyond attacks in the mountains or swamps on the Sandinista defense periphery, no matter how successful. The resistance can gain military credibility only by successful attacks on the gateway cities of Esteli, Matagalpa, and Juigalpa. Major attacks and acts of sabotage within the heartland (Military Regions II, III, and IV) would be most persuasive. Sandinista military strength may make such successes difficult to sustain more than momentarily. The resistance does have important popular support in the conflict zones (Military Regions I, V, VI, and VII), but their cause is less well known on the Pacific Coast, the locus of real political power.

Finally, the idea that the guerrillas' size, record, and strategic circumstances make them a force worth supporting does not square completely with reality. Size in a guerrilla war is not decisive, except perhaps in the final stage of the conflict. Fidel Castro descended from the Sierra Maestra in late 1958 with only 230 men.[15] Far more crucial to insurgent victory than size are having great popular support for the guerrilla force and facing an incumbent government that has burned its bridges with the people.

The guerrillas have brave soldiers and have proved they can survive, but is this enough? They have few major military successes and, given already enumerated army strengths, they are unlikely to be able to obtain and sustain the number of military victories necessary to defeat the Sandinistas and take power.

Strategic circumstances would appear to favor the guerrillas, in view of the geopolitical realities of US proximity and supportive neighbors, except that ambivalency on the Nicaraguan issue within the United States and Latin America paralyzes effective action. For their part, the Sandinistas and their Soviet allies know exactly what they are doing and are prepared to continue the struggle to the end. Their ability to sustain the army, as shown by periodic demobilizations over the past two years, demonstrates Sandinista capacity to continue the war. In my view, long wars tend to favor Marxist forces whether they are insurgents or the government in power. Marxists have high ideological commitment, strong organizations, and numerous effective ways to mobilize the populace.

The short-war option is attractive because it achieves decisive results favorable to US interests quickly. It allows for proper planning, not only for the day before the battle and the day of the battle itself, but also for the critically important day after the battle. This last period needs careful planning because it would undoubtedly be complicated by a firestorm of international and domestic protest as well as by the actions of thousands of Sandinista militants. The unpredictable effect of Nicaraguan nationalism on a US force presence on Nicaraguan soil for the first time in over fifty years is also a factor to think about.

The short-war option depends on the resistance to achieve some military successes in the first phase to set the stage for US military

involvement. In the second phase, as a result of guerrilla military success, there would in all likelihood be spontaneous public demands for national reconciliation, which if rejected by the Sandinistas would give the introduction of US forces in the third phase a legitimacy otherwise absent.

The short-war option also requires taking considerable political risks in view of the reluctance of the US public to support intervention by US forces. This option might also be costly in terms of lives, time, and resources. It would probably require a US post-invasion involvement of three to five years to ensure that Nicaragua established a working democracy and recovered economically from the war itself and the predictable Sandinista-inspired insurgency in the first 12 to 18 months after their removal, not to mention long-term terrorism thereafter.

Another danger is that this option may diminish the resistance's desire to fight if its members think that the United States will do most of the dirty work. They would have to understand that as our allies their role is critical too, and that US force involvement would depend on their success in the first phase of the strategy. One thing is sure. We would get into Nicaragua quickly, but we would not get out quickly. While Nicaragua would not be another Vietnam, neither would it be another Grenada. Thus our strategic interest in maintaining minimal force commitments in the Western Hemisphere would be degraded to the extent that we got bogged down in Nicaragua in a big way.

The US government should at least consider the no-war option. This option could achieve more bipartisan support than the other two unless the Sandinistas do something to provoke more aggressive US involvement. The US government may be able to gain increased support for US policies by emphasizing realistic diplomatic approaches. The general public both at home and abroad does not want to see US forces intervene in Nicaragua, nor does it want to see Nicaragua engage in revolutionary socialist internationalism.

We also would have the problem of drawing down support for the resistance, whose members would feel betrayed. Pressures for immigration to the United States would be felt as unreconstructed members of the resistance sought a safe haven elsewhere. Since amnesty would be part of the agreement, some resistance members might wish to join the internal opposition in Nicaragua—an internal opposition which in theory would be protected by the agreement. Other members of the resistance might opt to fight on in Nicaragua without sponsor or succor, but their chances of survival would be poor. US government support to the resistance would be phased down only upon reaching specific area security objectives, such as the cessation of Sandinista-exported revolution to neighboring states; reduction of armaments, force levels, and Soviet/Cuban presence; and appropriate guarantees for the political safety and freedom of opposition parties.

Prospects and Reflections

Achieving a portion—perhaps a significant portion—of our objectives is better than achieving nothing by trying to have it all, i.e. full democracy in Nicaragua. Of course, that truism applies only if the American people through their elected officials muster the necessary unity, resolve, and staying power with respect to support for neighboring countries and vigilance regarding negotiated settlements. If the security agreement cannot be achieved, the President and Congress can always go back to a choice between the long- and short-war options. If the agreement is achieved and flagrantly broken, then the United States should find it much easier to gain bipartisan support for strong action, possibly under the Rio Treaty.

What the US government would be striving for with the no-war approach is to neutralize Nicaragua politically with regard to her future external political activities, while at the same time assuring the survival of democratic elements within Nicaragua even if they must operate in a less-than-perfect democratic environment. There are clear risks involved. We do not trust the Sandinistas, and they do not trust us. The US government is concerned that they will continue to export subversion regardless of any security agreement. As Elliot Abrams put it, "Pieces of paper alone are not going to stop the Sandinistas."[16] What must be kept in mind, however, is that we do not have any real present alternative in view of the strong likelihood that the guerrillas cannot defeat the Sandinistas and in view of our own unwillingness to engage US forces. The resistance has in fact already achieved a great deal. The Sandinistas appear more willing to negotiate, and perhaps even to move to a more truly nonaligned status, to a less aggressively internationalist posture.[17]

We must also understand that diplomatic efforts which require for their success Nicaraguan democratization, i.e. loss of control, are doomed to failure. Past initiatives such as US-Nicaraguan bilateral talks at Manzanillo in 1984 failed precisely because Nicaragua held their internal political structure to be nonnegotiable. The current initiative of Costa Rican President Arias, which seeks to stop third-country support for insurgents and obtain over time Central American guerrilla/government cease-fires leading to dialogue, amnesty, and increasing democratization in conflict states, also will fail with regard to Nicaragua if the Sandinistas feel that it risks their hold on political power.[18]

At this crucial juncture, we might want to consider stepping back for a moment to review our progress to date. We may find we have been more successful than formerly realized. The time may be fast approaching when realistic diplomacy backed by increasingly effective force by the resistance will achieve, if not a perfect solution, then at least one protective of US interests—that is, stability in Central America based on maximum possible attainment of peace with freedom and justice. As Secretary of State

George Shultz put it, "The challenge we have always faced has been to forge policies that could combine morality and realism that would be in keeping with our ideals without doing damage to our national interests."[19]

NOTES

The author thanks Dr. Caesar D. Sereseres of the University of California, Irvine, for his valuable suggestions.

1. David Nolan, *The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Coral Gables, Fla.: Institute of InterAmerican Studies, Univ. of Miami, 1984), p. 13.
2. Information made public by well-placed Sandinista army defector Major Roger Miranda indicated that the number of Cuban military advisors may be approximately 500, still a substantial figure.
3. This article focuses only on security elements of the Sandinista strategy. For a fuller examination of the political side of their strategy, see "Sandinista Strategy: The Object is Survival" prepared for a Rand Corporation conference. This latter effort examines Sandinista strategy at the national level. Rand Corporation conference, 14 May 1987, Santa Monica, Calif.
4. Julia Preston, "Gringos Defeated in War Games," *The Washington Post*, 21 December 1986, pp. 1, 33.
5. Richard Halloran, "Sandinistas Seen as Badly Equipped," *The New York Times*, 20 December 1987, p. 20.
6. John Norton Moore, *The Secret War in Central America: Sandinista Assault on World Order* (Frederick, Md.: Univ. Publications of America, 1987), p. 7.
7. "Contadora" is the name given to diplomatic efforts by Colombia, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela to find a political solution to Central American conflicts. The effort grew out of a meeting on the Isla de Contadora in January 1983.
8. US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Revolution Beyond Our Borders: Sandinista Intervention in Central America*, Special Report No. 132 (Washington: US Dept. of State, September 1985), p. 38. During diplomatic discussions with the Sandinistas from August to October 1981, the US government offered a bilateral nonaggression agreement and renewed economic assistance if Nicaragua would stop supporting the insurgency in El Salvador and limit its own military buildup. At that time, Nicaragua rejected the US offer. Now, as a result of US pressure, applied principally through the Nicaraguan guerrillas, the Sandinistas are ready to negotiate a security agreement. The guerrillas were originally organized to obtain the objectives sought during the 1981 negotiations. They have helped the United States change the Sandinistas' mind regarding security-related negotiations. The guerrillas, however, cannot apply sufficient military pressure against Nicaragua to achieve significant internal political change. Only the United States can do that.
9. Charles Mohr, "U.S. in Warning to Nicaraguans on Terror Plans," *The New York Times*, 19 July 1985, pp. 1, 6.
10. Elliott Abrams, "Development of U.S.-Nicaraguan Policy," *US Department of State Current Policy, No. 915* (Washington: US Dept. of State, 5 February 1987), p. 1.
11. Joanne Omang, "The Contra Commitment," *The Washington Post*, 1 January 1987, pp. 1, 24.
12. Penn Kemble and Arturo Cruz, Jr., "How the Nicaraguan Resistance Can Win," *Commentary*, 82 (December 1986), 19-29.
13. Georgie Anne Geyer, "New Deal in Nicaragua?" *Harrisburg Patriot*, 9 July 1987, p. A23. Later reports indicate that the Soviets have provided all necessary oil to Nicaragua. The report of Soviet cutbacks is thought to have been a Soviet effort to get others to help Nicaragua. When that did not happen, the Soviets ensured that the required oil deliveries were made. Clearly, however, the Soviets want the Sandinistas to operate more cost effectively.
14. Laura Lopez, "Coping with the Contras," *Time*, 30 March 1987, p. 39.
15. Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), p. 456.
16. Abrams, p. 1.
17. Geyer, p. A23. The United States would still need to be vigilant because the FSLN leadership is heavily biased on the Leninist internationalist side. Most nationalists like Eden Pastora are gone. Despite bombastic statements made by the Ortega brothers in the wake of the Miranda defection concerning increasing military force levels by the mid-1990s, later pronouncements indicate that force levels remain negotiable.
18. The Arias plan was signed by five Central American nations on 7 August in Guatemala City. For the complete text of the plan, see *The New York Times*, 12 August 1987, p. A7.
19. George Shultz, "Morality and Realism in American Foreign Policy," *US Department of State Current Policy, No. 748* (Washington: US Dept. of State, 2 October 1985), p. 1.