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Nicaragua blames U.S. aid to guerrillas for attack on village

United Press International

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — Nicaragua has alleged that U.S. aid to rebels made possible an attack that killed four people and wounded 17 others, six of them children, the state-run newspaper said yesterday.

The attack was on the town of Rancho Grande, located 100 miles northeast of Managua in Matagalpa province, which was hit at dawn Saturday by rebels who have been trying to topple the Nicaraguan government.

Asked for reaction to the allegation, White House spokesman Larry Speakes said in Washington, "No comment."

According to the Nicaraguan government, the rebels were part of a group of about 2,000 who entered Nicaragua from bases in Honduras during the last four weeks.

Government officials said that four people in the village were killed, including a French doctor who worked there as a volunteer, and that 17 people were wounded.

"It is the unconditional and unrestricted aid that the U.S. government gives to the Somocista counterrevolutionary forces that is the ultimate cause of the situation that endangers Nicaragua," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement paraphrased by Barricada, the official newspaper of the ruling Sandinist party.

French residents of Nicaragua planned to demonstrate in front of the U.S. Embassy here, blaming the death of Dr. Pierre Grosjean on the U.S. government's support of the insurgents, the Associated Press reported.

Nicaragua says the rebels are led by former national guardsmen who were loyal to the late dictator Anastasio Somoza.

The rebels say they want to restore democracy and end the Marxist drift of the Sandinistas, named after nationalist guerrilla hero Augusto Cesar Sandino who fought the Somoza family in the 1920s and '30s.

Meanwhile, Time magazine reported in its April 4 issue that the United States controls a major faction of the anti-Sandinista guerrilla movement in Nicaragua.

The magazine said CIA agents and representatives of the U.S. Army's Southern Command based in Panama control one of the general staffs of the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces, an alliance of anti-Sandinista rebels.

The Reagan administration has been "deeply involved" with the alliance, which includes former members of Somoza's national guard, the report said.

Time said it had learned from anti-Sandinista guerrilla sources that an all-American military and intelligence staff was the "brains" of the current guerrilla campaign, and one of the three general staffs involved.

"It is composed of CIA experts and representatives of the U.S. Army's Southern Command based in Panama," Time said. "Its job is to pass orders to the second staff, which in turns relays them to the *contra* commanders."

The magazine said U.S. Ambassador to Honduras John Negroponte is said by the guerrillas to be "the coordinator of the separate command group activities."

Time said the reason for such a "Byzantine command structure" was an effort by the Reagan administration to conform to this year's Defense Department appropriations bill that prohibits direct military involvement in Nicaragua.

The State Department said yesterday that the opposition to the left-wing regime in Nicaragua was "diverse, nationalist and independent" but refused to comment on reports that the United States is helping the opposition.

Spokesman Alan Romberg said, "We do not address the question of our covert activities."

In a prepared answer to reporters' questions, he said, "The longstanding practice of this and previous administrations is not to address such

allegations. However, we have made it equally clear that we do not support any return to a Somocista government in Nicaragua."

He listed some of the opposition as disillusioned former Sandinistas, former members of Somoza's national guard and ethnic groups such as the Miskito Indians.

Elsewhere, Libya's official news agency said Libyan leader Moammar Khadafy has offered his nation's armed forces to Nicaragua. "The leader of the revolution has announced that Libya placed its forces at the disposal of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua to defend their soil and freedom against American aggression," the official Libyan Jamahiriyah News Agency said in an announcement monitored in Beirut.

On Sunday, two men identifying themselves as anti-Sandinista rebels said the CIA paid and armed them for an invasion into Nicaragua before they were captured by Nicaraguan forces in February.

The two men were presented at a news conference held by officials of Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front.