

RELACIONES MILITARES ESTADOS UNIDOS-NICARAGUA DURANTE LA SEGUNDA GUERRA MUNDIAL

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RÉSUMÉ

Par l'analyse de la politique militaire nordaméricaine envers le Nicaragua durant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, l'auteur examine la thèse qui donne aux USA la volonté délibérée de promouvoir le développement de la Garde Nationale du Nicaragua. L'article, dans sa conclusion, souligne que l'objectif de la politique des USA consistait moins à favoriser directement la Garde Nationale que de défendre la région contre les attaques extérieures dans le cadre de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale et dans celui d'une défense d'après guerre. Au cours de cette période, Somoza se plaignait régulièrement du manque d'appui militaire de la part des USA. Les autorités de ce pays, conscients du fait que Somoza voulait utiliser la modernization de la Garde dans le but d'étouffer ses opposants politiques, ils n'ont finalement pas mené jusqu'au bout leur programme d'assistance militaire dans les années qui suivirent immédiatement la Seconde Guerre Mondiale.

SAMENVATTING

Het artikel analyseert de militaire politiek van de Verenigde Staten ten opzichte van Nicaragua tijdens de Tweede Wereld Oorlog, speciaal de stelling dat de Verenigde Staten bewust de ontwikkeling van de Nicaraguaanse Nationale Garde had bevorderd. De auteur concludeert dat de doelstelling van de politiek van de Verenigde Staten was niet de begunstiging van de Nicaraguaanse Nationale Garde, maar de verdediging van de regio tegen externe aanvallen binnen de context van de Tweede Wereldoorlog en van de defensie strategie in de jaren daarna. In deze periode klaagde Somoza constant over het gebrek aan militaire hulp van de kant van de Verenigde Staten. De autoriteiten van de Verenigde Staten waen niet onbekend met het feit dat Somoza wilde de modernisering van de Nationale Garde gebruiken om zijn politieke tegenstanders te vervolgen en daarom hadden zij de realisering van de militaire hulp tijdens de jaren na de Tweede Wereldoorlog stopgezet.

UNITED STATES-NICARAGUAN MILITARY RELATIONS DURING WORLD WAR II

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ABSTRACT

In examining U.S. military policy toward Nicaragua during World War II, the article questions the validity of the thesis that the U.S. deliberately pursued a policy that fostered the development of the Nicaraguan National Guard. The author concludes that the United States did not pursue said policy, except to place it within the context of World War II and postwar defense strategies focused on protecting the region from external attack. In this period Somoza was constantly complaining about the lack of military support by the United States. The U.S. authorities understood that Somoza wanted to use the modernization of the Guard in order to silence his political opponents and therefore they refused to implement the military assistance program in the years immediately after World War II.

RESUMEN

Al analizar la política militar estadounidense hacia Nicaragua durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, el autor cuestiona la tesis de que los Estados Unidos deliberadamente promovieron el desarrollo de la Guardia Nacional Nicaragüense. El artículo concluye que el objetivo de la política estadounidense no era favorecer directamente a la Guardia Nacional Nicaragüense, sino defender la región contra ataques externos dentro del contexto de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y de la estrategia de defensa de posguerra. En este periodo Somoza se quejaba constantemente de la falta de apoyo militar por parte de los Estados Unidos. Las autoridades estadounidenses comprendieron que Somoza quiso utilizar la modernización de la Guardia Nacional para silenciar a sus oponentes políticos y por eso rechazaron llevar a cabo un programa de asistencia militar en los años inmediatos a la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

The collapse of the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua in July 1979 and the "Contra War" during the 1980s produced a plethora of literature, much of which traced the long-standing influence of the United States in that country's internal affairs. Regarding the Somoza dynasty, the conventional wisdom argued that the United States shored up the regime because of its continued support of U.S. policies from World War II through the Cold War. Everyone who pursued this argument agreed with Richard Millett's early assertion that the Nicaraguan National Guard remained the regime's strongest prop and that when it collapsed in the spring of 1979, so too, did Somoza. As Millett explains in his *Guardians of the dynasty*, the U.S. created the *Guardia* in the mid 1920s as a non-political police force, but instead it evolved into the personal tool of the Somoza regime. Throughout its existence the U.S. continued to provide the *Guardia* with the most modern equipment and training.¹ In examining U.S. military policy toward Nicaragua during World War II, this paper intends to examine the validity of the thesis that the U.S. deliberately pursued a policy that fostered the development of the Nicaraguan National Guard.²

¹ Millett, 1977. Historical accounts that place Nicaragua within the Central American framework include: Woodward, 1985; Bethell, 1991; Perez-Brignoli, 1989; and Torres-Rivas, 1993. Among the more salient works on Nicaragua are: Booth, 1982; and Waiker, 1981. The nineteenth century is described by Burns, 1991. The Somoza dynasty is the subject of Diederich, 1989. For a more sympathetic account of the first Somoza see Walters, 1993.

General surveys of United States-Central American relations that include Nicaragua are: Coatsworth, 1994; Findling, 1987; LaFeber, 1983; and Leonard, 1991. The only survey in English or Spanish of U.S.-Nicaraguan relations is Berman, 1986. Clark, 1992, concludes that with few exceptions, the United States did not identify itself with the first Somoza.

Among the more important studies of the events leading to the end of the Somoza dynasty are: Pastor, 1987; Lake, 1989; Morley, 1994; Kagan, 1996; and Somoza (as told to Jack Clark), *Nicaragua betrayed*, Boston, Western Islands, 1980. During the final year of the Somoza regime, U.S. Ambassador Mauricio Solaun also judged the *Guardia* to be Somoza's last bastion of support. See Leonard, 1997.

² During World War II, the United States also constructed naval stations at Money Penny Anchorage in the Gulf of Fonseca and Corinto on Nicaragua's west coast and an air station at Puerto Cabezas on Nicaragua's northeast coast to serve as defense sites for the Panama Canal. Operated by the U.S. for the war's duration, these bases had no relationship to Nicaragua's National Guard. See: Office for the Center of Military History, Washington, D.C., Caribbean Defense Command File 8-2.8 NI, "Nicaragua's War Effort," 13-21 [hereafter referred to as OCMH and CDC]; United States National Archives, Washington, D.C., Record Group 59, Decimal File 817.7962/36, September 28, 1942 and 817.7962/44, February 19, 1943; RG 59 Decimal File 817.911/1, August 22, 1942; RG 59 Lot Files Nicaragua, March 7, 1946, March 8, 1946 and May 8, 1946 [hereafter

PARAMETERS OF UNITED STATES-CENTRAL AMERICAN DEFENSE POLICY

Until late 1939 the United States focused its circum-Caribbean defense policy on Panama Canal security. Initially, sabotage was considered most likely, but subsequently air and submarine attacks were taken into consideration. Anticipating that Latin American nations could not contribute to the canal's defense, the Army and Navy Departments developed the so-called "Rainbow Plans" which assumed that only the United States could resist any covert or overt attack in the hemisphere; but not until early 1941 did the Army and Navy agree on specific defense measures, known as ABC-1. The Army was to assist the Latin American governments in preparing for defense against invasion or political domination, while the Army Air Force was to destroy Axis sea communications and the Navy was to patrol the eastern Caribbean, attacking Axis ships that ignored warnings to stay out of the declared neutral zone. Central America fell within these broad parameters.³

At the same time, the United States moved on the diplomatic front to incorporate Latin America into its hemispheric defense plans at the Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace held at Buenos Aires in 1936, and the Eighth International Conference of American States that convened in Lima in 1938. Despite lofty declarations issued at the conclusion of each conference, Latin Americans still resented the historic record of U.S. intervention in its internal affairs and interpreted Washington's current concern as a possible "back door" effort to repudiate its newly enunciated Good Neighbor Policy and again interfere in local affairs. Only after the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 and its spring 1940 *Blitzkrieg*

referred to as USNA and RG]; and *Building the navy's bases in World War II: history of the bureau of yards and docks and the civil engineer corps. 1940-1946* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1947), vol. II, 36-38.

³ A long range view of U.S. security concerns is explored by Kane, 1972. For a discussion of western hemispheric defense planning in the late 1930s see: OCMH, CDC File 8-2.8AE, "Theater plans, general."; Conn and Fairchild, 1960; Craven and Cate, 1948; Morison, 1966; and Haglund, 1984. The complete text of the "Rainbow Plans" can be found at the USNA, RG 47, The Adjutant General's Office, Administrative Service Division, Operations Branch, Special Projects-War Plans "Color." The ABC-1 Report is printed in full in United States Congress, Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, *Hearings before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1947, part 15, 1485-1550).

that resulted in the capitulation of the Low Countries and France did most Latin Americans become convinced of an Axis threat to the hemisphere.⁴

Regarding Central America, as late as January 1939 the U.S. Army concluded that the possibility of any political, economic, cultural or military penetration of the region by a power other than the United States was negligible. This, despite the German population in each of the five republics and the extensive trade relationship between the republics and the Third Reich. Under these conditions, the War Department encouraged the completion of the Inter-American Highway and an increase in economic and cultural activities to further cement the existing favorable United States-Central American relationship.⁵

A year later, in 1940, following the outbreak of the European War, Central America took on a new significance. In making a comparison to the Japanese advance on the Malay Peninsula, U.S. policymakers now concluded that "a sea landing in Central America and a threat toward the south for an attack on the Panama Canal was a consideration not to be entirely passed over." The concern for Central American security increased following the invasion of France in the spring of

⁴ For a discussion of each conference see: *Report of the delegates of the United States of America to the inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace*, Buenos Aires, Argentina, December 1-23, 1936 (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1937); *Report of the delegates of the United States of America to the Eighth International Conference of American States*, Lima, Peru, December 7-27, 1938 (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1939); *Report of the Delegates of the United States of America to the First Meeting of Consultation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics*, Panama City, Panama, September 23-October 3, 1939 (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1940); and *Report of the delegates of the United States of America to the Second Meeting of Consultation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics. Habana, Cuba, July 21-30, 1940* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1940). Personal accounts by two key U.S. policymakers are helpful: Hull, 1948; and Duggan, 1949. Older surveys of United States-Latin American relations provide greater analysis of this time period than more recent accounts. For a comparison see: Mecham, 1963; Langley, 1989; and Smith, 1996. Among the studies of the Good Neighbor Policy are Wood, 1961; Geliman, 1979; Guerrant, 1979; and Pike, 1995.

⁵ A month prior to the Lima Conference in 1938, the U.S. Army's War Plans Division requested that its Intelligence Division (G-2) undertake a study of the Latin American republics to determine the extent of cooperation that could be expected resisting "Fifth Column" activities, Axis military cooperation, a foreign invasion, disruption of U.S. trade and what military facilities would be available to the United States. George C. Marshall Library, Lexington, Virginia, Marshall Foundation National Archive Research Project, Item 4463, Central America; and United States Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, File 21939-9, "A study of Central America, Panama and Colombia, January 26, 1939." [hereafter referred to as USAWC].

1940. It prompted the initiation of bilateral military conversations between U.S. and Central American military officers for the purpose of making available to the United States "the use of [their] available sea, air and land bases" when necessary for carrying out hemispheric defense plans. Furthermore, the United States wanted the right to act in case of any direct attack or fifth column movement against any of the republics, whether the Central Americans requested such assistance or not. In other words, the United States became the final arbiter of the threat to Central American security.⁶

During the 1940 military bilateral staff conversations with Central Americans, the United States promised to provide military advisers, armaments, and training for regional military personnel. And the United States, not the Central Americans, was to determine the type and amount of military material and the financial arrangements for their sale. But in 1940, U.S. arms supplies were severely limited and sales guarded by extensive legal constraints. Still, the Central American diplomats in Washington joined with their colleagues from other Latin American countries in making incessant demands before the State, War and Navy Departments for military hardware, to a total of over \$ 1 billion by the end of 1940. In response, a Joint Army and Navy Board was established in December 1940 to recommend the amount of aid for each Latin American country. Its recommendations were incorporated into the Lend-Lease program approved by Congress in March 1941. For all Latin America, the Joint Board recommended a \$ 400 million, five-year aid program for army material only. Under existing policy guidelines, all Central America was eligible to receive arms for internal security only and the negotiations for such material were to be conducted by the State Department, not the Army and Navy. A provision of the revised Lend-Lease program in October 1941 allotted two thirds of the monies for Army material, such as ordnance and ordnance stores, aircraft and aeronautical material, tanks and other vehicles and miscellaneous equipment. Because of pressing

⁶OCMH, CDC 8-2.8 AB, "The Caribbean defense theater in the defense of the Americas;" OCMH 8-2.8 BA, "Bilateral Staff Conversations," 1-7; and Conn and Fairchild, *Framework*, 172-186. Prior to the bilateral staff conversations the Central American republics had agreed to restrict the entry of belligerent submarines into their territorial waters and ports. See USNA, RG 59 Office of Inter-American Affairs, General Memorandum, Box 5, June 6, 1941. [Hereafter referred to as OIAA.]

needs in Asia and Europe, only minimal deliveries could be expected before 1943.⁷

UNITED STATES MILITARY POLICY TOWARDS NICARAGUA

Nicaragua assumed an important place within the broad parameters of this regional defense policy because it bordered on the Panama Canal.⁸ Actually, Nicaragua's position within the context of regional defense dated to May 1939, five months before the outbreak of the European War, when Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza de García visited Washington. After two days of wide-ranging discussions (May 5-6, 1939), U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt accepted Somoza's request for yet another survey of the San Juan River as a possible trans-isthmian canal site and the assignment of a U.S. Army officer to assist with the reopening of the Nicaraguan Military Academy and to conduct a feasibility study for the establishment of an aviation school. Before leaving Washington, pleased with his triumph at the White House, Somoza offered Nicaragua for the "defense of the United States, which is the defense of the continent."⁹ Although Somoza's arrival served as a dress rehearsal for the forthcoming visit of England's King and Queen and Somoza's need to reinforce his image at home as a close friend of the United States, the agreements also happened to fit the War Department's growing need to plan for hemispheric defense amidst the rising war clouds in Europe.

While the \$ 30 million survey of the San Juan River only reaffirmed the river's unsuitability for a canal,¹⁰ Major Charles Mullins' assign-

⁷ OCMH, CDC 8-2.8 BA, "Bilateral conversations," 1-16; USNA, CDC Decimal File 1941-1945, June 20, 1945; and Conn and Fairchild, *Framework*, 207-221. For a discussion of the Lend-Lease Program see Kimbal, 1969.

⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York, Papers of Harry Hopkins, Federal Bureau of Investigation Report, "Axis penetration in Nicaragua," April 3, 1941, 3.

⁹ For a summary of the Somoza-Roosevelt conversations see: United States Department of State, *Foreign relations of the United States, 1939*, volume V, *The American republics* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1957), 720-747; Clark, *The U.S. and Somoza*, 63-65; "Somoza arrives in Washington," *New York Times*, May 6, 1939, 1; "Ends White House visit," *New York Times*, May 7, 1939, 1; "Secretary Hull gives luncheon," *New York Times*, May 8, 1939, 5; "Somoza seeks canal construction," *New York Times*, May 9, 1939, 3; and "Somoza praises Roosevelt policy," *New York Times*, May 13, 1939, 5.

¹⁰ United States Congress, Senate, Special Committee for the Investigation of the

ment as Director of the Nicaraguan Military Academy proved to be more significant. Mullins arrived in Managua within a month of the Roosevelt-Somoza meeting in Washington. (An official mission contract was not signed until May 22, 1941.) Well aware of Somoza's personal use of the National Guard, the State Department advised Mullins to keep his role strictly confined to the technical aspects of administration and training and to consult with the U.S. legation in Managua on everything regarding the *Guardia*, including the acquisition of military hardware. The Department's instructions did not keep Somoza from consulting with Mullins on matters of defense, particularly after Nicaragua joined the Allied cause in December 1941. Somoza appointed Mullins a brigadier general in the *Guardia*, requiring that he report directly to the president.

The Military Academy, which had closed shortly after the departure of U.S. Marines in 1933, reopened in November 1939 with a \$ 40,000 authorization for 100 students. Classes began in 1940 in buildings located on Campo de Marte. The first 50 students graduated in 1943. The three-year curriculum embraced military and non-military subjects. Using U.S. textbooks, the military instruction emphasized U.S. Army organization and doctrine. Non-military classes included mathematics, physics, chemistry, electricity, mechanics, history, economics, civics and English. Mullins obtained a \$ 7,500 grant from the Office of Inter-American Affairs for teaching supplies and equipment. Until February 1944, Major Charles M. Duke, an army engineer in charge of the Canal Survey Office in Managua, taught civil and military engineering at the academy. The academy staff also included seven *Guardia* officers and four civilian professors.¹¹

Despite its proximity to the Panama Canal, Nicaragua had many shortcomings. Its Caribbean ports, Puerto Cabezas and Bluefields, were of no military value because of their sandy shores, inadequate landing facilities, lack of protection and the absence of connecting

National Defense Program, September 4, 1946, 80th Congress, 2nd sess., 21363-21365; USNA, RG 59 Decimal File 817.812/993, January 31, 1941; USNA, RG 59 Lot Files, Nicaragua, March 3, 1942 and March 14, 1942; and Roosevelt Library, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Official File, Box 1, Memorandum, April 3, 1942.

¹¹ USNA, RG 59, Lot Files, Nicaragua, Memorandum June 21, 1939; USNA, RG 59, Decimal File 817.60/8762, February 15, 1940; RG 165, The War Department, Operations Planning Division [hereafter referred to as OPD] Decimal File 336, Nicaragua, Memorandum June 26, 1944; and OCMH, CDC 8-2.8 NI, "Military mission, Republic of Nicaragua," 1-3.

roads to the interior. Only Corinto on the Pacific side, with its large protected harbor, was suitable for large ships. With a "non-descript, undisciplined and poorly equipped" army infantry combat unit, only the National Guard's 2 500 officers and men had any military significance. On the positive side, the recent government attention to aviation offered some potential. Captain Guillermo Rivas Cuadra, who trained in Mexico and Guatemala, commanded a 72-man airforce that included 50 pilots. Although the pilots lacked combat flying experience, bombing and gunnery training, they had at their disposal two German fighters that could carry 10 thirty-pound bombs, three Waco fighters with 30 caliber machine guns, and one Waco 5-seat passenger plane. These men were ready for the technical training that Somoza had requested from Roosevelt in 1939. Also, Managua's Las Mercedes Airport, with complete facilities and lighting was capable of handling all types of aircraft, including heavy bombers. The capital's old, unmodernized National Airport was still available for smaller craft. The airfield at Puerto Cabezas on Nicaragua's northeast Caribbean Coast had good gravel runways long enough for all except four engine type planes but lacked lighting and 100-octane fuel. Twenty-seven lesser quality fields provided air linkage throughout the country.¹²

Against this backdrop the War Department's Liaison, Officer Major Lemuel Mathewson conferred with General Somoza from August 27 to 29, 1940. As a result of these bilateral conversations, Nicaragua agreed to maintain effective surveillance over aliens and their sympathizers, to adequately protect all vital facilities, to exchange security information with the United States, and to permit a photographic U.S. air mission and U.S. Army medical, engineering and signal surveys of the country. In case of an attack Somoza would request U.S. armed assistance and until the arrival of U.S. troops, secure the government, prevent damage to key facilities and interfere with enemy operations as much as possible. Should the attack be upon another regional country, U.S. troops obtained the right to transit Nicaragua without interference, while the local government mobilized public opinion in support of U.S. action. While not specifically part of the written agreement, the U.S. made it clear that it would employ its armed forces to assist Nicaragua in defeating "Fifth Column" attacks. Just

¹² USAWC, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. WCG-269- 35/23, "A strategic study of Nicaragua," July 30, 1940.

how these land, sea and air forces would be forthcoming was not spelled out because the amount and type of U.S. military aid and time of arrival would depend upon existing circumstances. The U.S. also agreed to assist with the acquisition of armaments and advisers to train Nicaragua's personnel, but again the assistance would come in relationship to the extent of available resources and existing legal restrictions. Although Somoza represented the government in these conversations, Mathewson recommended that some definite official statement be obtained. The agreement, paralleling those signed with the other Central American republics, went into effect on October 1, 1940.¹³

Somoza quickly followed these discussions with a shopping list: military and air advisers, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents for the training of secret police, construction of a new and larger airport, enlarged port facilities at Corinto and Masachapa (a Somoza-owned property), fortifications at the Gulf of Fonseca, completion of the Inter-American Highway and construction of a radio communications station at the presidential palace in Managua. The State Department expressed some interest in expansion of air facilities at Managua and port facilities at Corinto, but nothing more.¹⁴

Nicaragua's importance to U.S. defense planning increased in late April 1941 when President Roosevelt accepted a Joint Army and Navy Plan for armed assistance to the government in Managua, along with those in Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Costa Rica and Guatemala. Because the significance of these countries rested on their proximity to the Panama Canal, the War Department directed the Commanding General of the Caribbean Defense Command and the Commander of the 15th Naval District to draw up specific plans for each of the countries. The Nicaraguan plan was completed in September 1941. It specified that within 48 hours of war CDC troops from the Panama Canal Zone would occupy Managua in order to secure the airport and its support services, the Casa Presidencial, all public and private communications systems and roads, railroads, public installations, government officials and the city of Grenada. At the same time, naval forces would secure San Juan del Norte on the Caribbean and Corinto

¹³ OCMH, CDC 8-2.8, "Bilateral conversations, Appendix 1: Summary of staff conversations with American republics, August-October, 1940," 36-39.

¹⁴ USNA, RG 59, State Department Lot Files, Nicaragua, Memorandum September 11, 1940.

on the Pacific. Subsequently, Army troops would guard the facilities not under Navy control at the two ports as well as roads and railroads leading from the cities. As reinforcements arrived from the United States, naval forces would depart and the army would expand its influence over the country (Ross, 1992, 242-254). Unfortunately, the Army and Navy never agreed upon a chain of command to implement the plan. For the war's duration the United States and Nicaragua based their cooperation upon the October 1, 1940 military agreement and the May 22, 1941 agreement by which the U.S. supplied the Director of the Nicaraguan Military Academy.¹⁵

Thus, within an eight-month period Nicaragua was incorporated into the U.S. defense strategy for the isthmus which emphasized local preparedness until the arrival of U.S. forces.

Almost immediately after the Pearl Harbor attack, Nicaragua declared war on Japan, and when Italy and Germany joined in against the United States, Somoza pledged his country's allegiance to the Allied cause. He called in approximately 300 National Guardsmen from León, Chinandega and other provinces to increase security at Campo de Marte and at the waterworks, power plant, Tropical Radio, American Cables, Pan American facilities and other points in Managua. He also dispatched troops to Montelimar and San Juan del Sur. At the same time, Ambassador Pierre de L. Boal moved quickly to secure rights for aerial surveillance of the country, for U.S. military aircraft to fly over Nicaragua without advance notice, and for use of the Las Mercedes airport, where a detachment of U.S. Army enlisted men would be stationed for fuel and repair.¹⁶

During the first week of January, Lieutenant Colonel H. M. Melaskay arrived from the CDC office in Panama to meet with Ambassador Boal, Chief of the U.S. Military Mission Lieutenant Colonel Mullins and President Somoza to discuss Nicaragua's role in the war. Somoza eagerly offered his army, which he claimed numbered 3,000

¹⁵ Marshall Research Library, National Archives Research Project, item 4471, Central America, December 11, 1941.

¹⁶ Nicaragua, Foreign Ministry, Note B-208, December 17, 1941 and Annex 1; Boal memorandum December 16, 1941 in DCD, 2-2.8, "Nicaraguan war effort; 15-16" and USNA, RG 226, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, item 10956, FBI Memorandum, February 2, 1942. Because the detachment became frustrated as it did little more than serve as sentries at the Managua airport, it was soon withdrawn from Nicaragua. "Nicaraguan war effort," 16.

men and 10,000 reserves. With appropriate supplies and training from the United States, Somoza was sure that he could have them ready in a few months. He also offered his Navy, which consisted of two ships — a 75-foot sub-chaser and a 125-foot boat purchased from German sources. Despite the “military vacuum in Central America” that might encourage the Japanese to believe that an attack in the region would pay dividends, U.S. officials did not share Somoza’s opinion that an attack was imminent. Rather, as a result of the Melaskay-Somoza discussions, the U.S. offered to overhaul the Nicaraguan boats and train their crews to more efficiently operate in Nicaragua’s territorial waters. The U.S. also agreed to supplement its 15-man air corps servicing detachment at Las Mercedes airport with an infantry detachment consisting of one officer and 15 enlisted men to assist with airport security and to serve as instructors at the Military Academy. This new contingent would consist of 4 instructors in machine guns, 5 in rifle marksmanship, 2 in bayonet fighting, one in Browning automatic rifle, one motor mechanic and one radio operator.¹⁷

At the same time as Somoza agreed to the increased U.S. security measures, he also called up an estimated 2,000-3,000 ill-equipped and ill-trained military reserves to assist the National Guard in protecting these facilities. To correct the reserves’ deficiencies Somoza asked for additional U.S. military instructors and equipment, including the appropriate retrofitting of heavy tractors used on construction of the inter-American Highway so that they could serve as tanks. Colonel Mullins supported Somoza’s request for increased military instructors and equipment to replace existing antiquated stockpiles.

However, the U.S. Caribbean Defense Command at Panama rejected the suggestions. Although the CDC staff considered the Nicaraguans to be best trained troops in all Central America, it also thought that it would take too long to train them in the use of modern arms and even then the Nicaraguans would be of little assistance in guarding U.S. military bases because the language difference “might create unpleasantness” and their presence “would create difficulties of sanitation and might result in disease infection of American troops.” Furthermore, any use of the Nicaraguan forces would increase the demand for military supplies that the CDC could not meet. Somoza’s

¹⁷ OCMH, CDC, 8-2.8 NI, “Nicaraguan war effort,” 8-9; and USNA, RG 59, Lot Files, Nicaragua, March 3, 1942.

suggestion to retrofit the tractors with armor to serve as tanks was dismissed out of hand.¹⁸

In Washington the War Department pointed out that the initial allotment of \$ 400,000 in Lend-Lease military equipment was sufficient for the size of the Nicaraguan infantry force that Mullins expected to train. And given the more pressing demands elsewhere, delivery of this equipment could not be expected until 1943. The Department also opposed an increase in the size of the U.S. military mission at Managua.¹⁹

In June 1942 Colonel Mullins left Nicaragua for service in a combat unit.²⁰ U.S. military policy in Nicaragua drifted under Mullins' replacement Colonel Fred T. Cruise, who had been Assistant Chief of Staff for G-2 in the Panama Canal Department. In fairness to Cruise, U.S. military policy in 1942 focused upon the German U-boat threat in the Caribbean, not the modernization of the Nicaraguan military. Cruise left Managua in December 1942 to become military attaché at the U.S. legation in Guatemala City. His replacement, Army Corps of Engineer Lieutenant Colonel LeRoy Bartlett, Jr., had been a member of the U.S. military mission in Bolivia. Bartlett considered it "one of the most desirable of any" Latin American mission because of direct dealing with Somoza; he declared that Nicaragua "will always be one of the easiest fields in which to show results by a military mission."²¹

Bartlett inherited a Military Academy in disarray. The school's infrastructure was poorly administered and its scholastic program lacked a clear direction. He first reordered the school's administrative structure to control its support operations. He then obtained the War Department's approval to send three Nicaraguan academy officers to study training methods at West Point and at the Engineers' School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Other Nicaraguan officers came to the United States for instruction in radio, military medicine, airplane mechanics, coast guard service, infantry and field artillery. In 1943 Bartlett arranged with the Commander of the CDC for four Nicaraguan officers

¹⁸ Marshall Library, National Archive Project, item 5671, Nicaragua, 1942; OCMH, CDC 8-2.8 NI, "Nicaraguan war effort," 10-11; USNA, RG 59, Lot Files, March 3, 1942

¹⁹ Marshall Library, National Archives Project, item 5671, Nicaragua, 1942.

²⁰ Mullins departure was not an amicable one. He bypassed the legation in dealing directly with Somoza and failed to report all the income received from the government of Nicaragua. USNA, RG 59, Lot Files, Nicaragua, Memorandum October 1, 1942.

²¹ USNA, RG 165, OPD 336, Nicaragua, June 26, 1944.

and instructors at the academy to train in jungle warfare, one supply officer in quartermastering and one with explosives in Panama. Lack of Nicaraguan government funds prevented the training of additional personnel in either Panama or the United States. Still, these experiences contributed to a modernized curriculum at the Military Academy and the graduation of more officers than the *Guardia* could absorb in mid-1944.

Satisfied with the number and quality of Academy-trained officers for the *Guardia*, Somoza accepted Bartlett's proposal to revise the curriculum so that agricultural and civil engineering courses could be offered to those students not accepted into the *Guardia*. Subsequently, the agricultural program was replaced by training specialists in radio and telephone communications. The new curriculum went into effect in July 1944. To improve the *Guardia's* morale and efficiency and to minimize political influence, Bartlett proposed the institutional regulations for pay, promotion and retirement. Somoza initially agreed to the proposal, but abandoned the idea with the political turmoil that confronted him in mid-1944.²²

By 1943 the Axis threat to the Caribbean region had dissipated (Morison, 1966; Roskill, 1956, and Herwig, 1976), but it did not deter Bartlett from his goal of modernizing the Military Academy's curriculum. For example, he obtained the services of Second Lieutenant Ignacio Cortés from the Panama Mobile Forces Unit. Cortés conducted courses on jungle warfare, sniper and infiltration and gave demonstrations in river crossing, attacks on a fortified villages and jungle pill boxes, ambush of river patrols and supply by airplane. Although jungle warfare training was designed to deal with an external attack, Somoza was so impressed by the demonstrations at the Academy's field training exercises in November and December 1944 that he requested that the same training be given to the *Guardia*. In contrast, Bartlett was less successful in obtaining new funds from the

²² OCMH, CDC 8-2.8 NI, "Military mission, Republic of Nicaragua," 3-6. The military subjects of the curriculum included: close and open order drill, physical training in unarmed defense, rifle and pistol nomenclature, the employment and tactics of 60 mm mortars and 37 AT guns, theory of rifle marksmanship, sniper and reaction, 22 caliber rifle practice, scouting and patrolling, individual protective measures, field-fortifications, sanitation and first aid, personal hygiene, squadron and platoon and company and battalion tactics, ballistics, practical musketry, hand grenades, and theoretical jungle warfare followed by a two week jungle experience. USNA, RG 165, OPD 336, Nicaragua, June 26, 1944.

Office of Inter-American Affairs for the Academy's revised curriculum in civil engineering and radio and telephone communications.²³

In 1944, anxious "to further the post-war expansion of U.S. influence," Bartlett strongly encouraged Somoza to request an extension of the existing military agreement beyond its expiration in 1945. He also asked for an expansion of the military mission to include an assistant director for the Military Academy, air and medical officers, a civil engineer, an infantry captain and three sergeants. Anticipating that after the war the *Guardia* would be unable to absorb the 90 officers graduated from the academy every three years, Bartlett suggested that one third of the officers be trained in agriculture and civil engineering.²⁴

CDC Commander General George T. Brett concurs with Bartlett. Neither of these U.S. officers concerned themselves with the political consequences of a modernized Nicaraguan military. Rather, each anticipated a cohesive postwar hemispheric military defense policy under which the Latin American militaries would be placed within the context of U.S. policy.

Somoza was receptive to each of Bartlett's suggestions and expressed a special interest in securing the services of an air officer and an expansion of the training program to include the *Guardia*. Nicaragua's air corps was in poor shape. Despite training in the United States its maintenance system lacked organization and, of its 22 mechanics only 7 were considered qualified to work on airplanes and engines. They lacked proper maintenance equipment and, in fact, most engine repair was done in the United States. Somoza cautioned that his government could not afford the expanded financial commitment from \$5,000 annually to \$7,752 to support the expanded U.S. military mission; he was also infuriated over the alleged U.S. failure to deliver the requested arms under the Lend-Lease program. Still wishing to accommodate Washington and hopeful of gaining military benefits for his own purposes, Somoza instructed Ambassador Guillermo Sevilla Sacasa to initiate discussions for an extension of the military contract. A new contract was ready in March, but its implementation

²³ OCMH, CDC 8-2.8 NI, "Military mission, Republic of Nicaragua," 7, 9, 13; and OCMH, CDC 8-2.8 NI, "Nicaraguan war effort," 19.

²⁴ OCMH, CDC 8-2.8 NI, "Military mission, Republic of Nicaragua," 7-14; and USNA, RG 165, OPD 336, Nicaragua, June 26, 1944.

awaited the outcome of the military bilateral staff conversations scheduled with all the Central American republics.²⁵

The bilateral military staff conversations were the product of U.S. postwar planning that followed the allied military successes in 1943 and 1944. The conversations in Managua went smoothly between May 28 and June 2, 1945. Somoza used the opening session to repeat his plea for a trans-isthmian canal across Nicaragua, to express his willingness to provide additional lands for the U.S. air force and to suggest that the U.S. construct telephone lines across all Central America to serve both military and civilian purposes. The U.S. negotiating team — Brett, General Francis P. Hardaway and Admiral Richard J. Kingman — brushed Somoza's statements aside to pursue purely U.S. interests. The subsequent agreement differed little from those reached with Nicaragua's neighbors and reflected the War Department's interest in establishing a cohesive postwar hemispheric defense policy under its direction. Nicaragua agreed to organize its armed forces according to U.S. plans and in accordance with its doctrines, to equip its armed forces with U.S. material, to exchange obsolete and foreign material for U.S. equipment, to send officers and enlisted men to U.S. service schools and to cooperate with the U.S. in the defense of the western hemisphere. For its part, the U.S. agreed to extend the stay of its military mission in Managua and also to establish an air mission there. Nicaragua would also ask for a Naval mission provided that the U.S. would supply the vessels recommended in the agreement. As to the shape of Nicaragua's postwar armed forces, the negotiators agreed that it would consist of the Presidential Guard, Departmental Troops, a Combat Battalion Team, each with attached medics for a total of 250 officers, 4 warrant officers, and 3,924 enlisted men. The Air Force would total 45 officers and 100 enlisted men with 5 PT-13s, 6 AT-6s, 20 A-9s, 2 AT-11s and 7 P-51s.

With agreement in hand, the CDC Commander General Brett recommended that Nicaragua be supplied as soon as possible with 2 military police companies, 1 rifle training company, 1 infantry battalion of the battalion combat team, 1 combat engineer company, 1 infantry battalion including 3 rifle companies minus the heavy weapons platoons;

²⁵ USNA, RG 165, OPD 336, Nicaragua, September 6, 1944, December 16, 1944, February 8, 1945, March 21, 1945, March 24, 1945 and March 26, 1945; and OCMH, CDC, 8-2.8 NL, "Military mission, Republic of Nicaragua," 7-14.

5 PT-13s, 3 AT-6s and 3 C-45s. Brett also recommended that the ground mission be expanded by 3 officers and 2 enlisted men and that Nicaragua formally apply for an air mission of 1 officer and 2 enlisted men.²⁶

The bilateral agreement and Brett's subsequent equipment requests reflected the CDC postwar planning for the defense of the Panama Canal. The CDC assumed a drastic cutback in the U.S. military commitment to the region, which in turn required the local governments to fill the gap. With the stationing of U.S. military missions in each country, the Americans believed that they could restrain the local military from interfering in politics.

The CDC and Somoza also argued for delivery of alleged long overdue Lend-Lease military equipment. Originally, administrators allocated \$ 1.3 million in Lend-Lease aid for Nicaragua, \$ 50,000 in naval equipment and the balance in army material. Of the army material, \$ 250,000 was to be allocated in 1941 and 1942, the remainder in 1943 and after. However, the demands of other theaters made it impossible for the U.S. to supply more than token shipments to all Latin America in 1941 and 1942. Increases in the next two years brought the total value of Lend-Lease aid shipped to Nicaragua by December 31, 1944 to \$ 1,083,747.15, or 83.37% of the initial contract. Among the supplies included in these shipments were three light tanks, four 60 m. mortars, forty-six 45-caliber submachine guns, two thousand fragmentation hand grenades and five-hundred 30-pound fragmentation bombs. Appropriate ammunition and covers for the guns, rifle targets, cartridge belts, and tripods were also included, and other supplies included four 1/2-ton weapons carrying trucks, twenty 1/4-ton cargo trucks, three motorcycles, six-hundred signal lights, thirty-five machetes and twenty-five pocket magnifying stereoscopes. Along with uniforms and field equipment, these supplies went to the Military Academy for training purposes. Little of it found its way into the *Guardia*. At the time of the bilateral military staff conversations in

²⁶ OCMH, CDC 8-2.8 BA, "Bilateral Staff Conversations," 120-124; USNA, RG 165, OPD 336, Nicaragua, June 16, 1945 and June 21, 1945; USNA RG 165, OPD 336, Latin America (General), Section 8, June 28, 1945; and USNA, RG 335, CDC, Decimal File 41-45, June 16, 1945. Subsequent to the bilateral conversations the CDC sponsored speaking engagements for U.S. military personnel who had European battle experience to impress the Central American governments and to encourage their support for expanded missions throughout the region. See: USNA, RG 165, OPD 336, Latin America (General), Section 8, June 28, 1945.

May 1945, little remained of the Nicaraguan allotment. Thus both CDC officers and Somoza incorrectly thought accelerated deliveries would go a long way toward meeting the postwar security objectives.²⁷

If, during the bilateral staff conversations, Brett, Hardaway and Kingman idealized postwar defense, Somoza dealt with local political dynamics, real or imagined. Somoza hosted CDC Commanding General George H. Brett at a dinner in his private residence. Brett was impressed by Somoza's friendly attitude toward the U.S. and determination to adhere to Washington's policies. Over dinner Somoza offered an attractive piece of real estate south of Managua for a new airport, spent a great deal of time discussing the military benefits of a canal across Nicaragua and, for the first time, proposed the building of a hydroelectric plant on Lake Nicaragua, ostensibly to serve both the canal and potential U.S. installations in the country. In turning to regional politics, Somoza claimed that Mexico had been responsible for the political upheavals in El Salvador and Guatemala and was wooing Honduras and Costa Rica in order to force a Central American union to encircle Nicaragua. For these reasons, Somoza needed to strengthen his military.²⁸

Somoza's insecurity dated to the spring of 1944 when the dictatorships of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua were wracked by political dissent that resulted in the ouster of Maximiliano Hernández-Martínez in El Salvador and Jorge Ubico in Guatemala. While Tiburcio Carías Andino weathered the storm in Honduras, the Nicaraguan strongman felt sufficient pressure to announce that he would not seek re-election in 1947. He blamed the Mexicans for his problems. After the Mexican Embassy gave refuge to 50 women demonstrators, Somoza threatened to blockade the compound: "He has only one toilet and that would have fixed him good and plenty." He also asserted that Mexico worked in concert with Argentina to establish an anti-United States bloc among the Latin American na-

²⁷ OCMH, CDC 8-2.8 NI, "Nicaraguan war effort," 23-25; USNA, RG 160 ASF International Division, Subject File 1940-1946, Series 2, "Record of assignments for years 1941, 1942 and 1943: items of A.S.F. procurement to Latin American Countries," and "Record of assignments to all Latin American countries through 1944;" USNA, RG 165, OPD 336, Nicaragua, October 7, 1944 and November 9, 1944; and USNA, RG 338, CDC, Decimal File 400.145, Contracts and Lend-Lease (General), July 19, 1944.

²⁸ USNA, RG 165 OPD 336, Nicaragua, May 30, 1945. For a discussion of the efforts at establishing a Central American union see: Karnes, 1961; and Herrarte, 1964.

tions. He charged that the State Department unjustly placed his country in the same category as El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, where the military served the interests of the dictators and they sold Lend-Lease equipment to revolutionaries in other countries. Somoza swore that he had no aggressive designs on the isthmus, but he could not prevent the infiltrators from creating trouble in Nicaragua. After all, the *Guardia's* Lee-Enfield and Krag rifles were in such deplorable condition that he had to issue Czech rifles to the presidential guard, even though there was no ammunition for them. Despite his "100%" effort on behalf of the United States, he felt like "an ant against an elephant," and "a dove to be eaten" unless he received arms and ammunition.²⁹

Somoza continued to plead his case before Bartlett and any other CDC representative who visited Managua. He consistently pledged Nicaragua to a peaceful regional policy, claiming that he wanted the rifles and ammunition solely to train the *Guardia*, whose antiquated Krag rifles were little more than shotguns. He wanted 5,000 rifles and the appropriate ammunition. As early as November 1944, Somoza asserted that only the U.S. presidential election kept him from going to Washington to see Roosevelt personally. "I've been a good friend to the United States," Somoza exclaimed. Asserting the legality of his presidency, Somoza charged that "I've done a lot for Nicaragua — highways, schools, balanced the budget, paid off foreign loans and, above all, a stable government." Claiming to "be sick of the job," Somoza added that "...if the Nicaraguan people or the United States thinks another president here would do better, I'll get out tomorrow." Tomorrow never came, but Somoza persisted: "I'm going to keep after this until I get the rifles and ammunition."³⁰

Somoza's frustration reached a highwater mark on the evening July 12, 1945, when the Chief of the U.S. military mission in Managua called upon him at Montelimar. Suffering from amoebic dysentery and malaria, Somoza was in a foul and violent humor. In a brief conversation, Somoza harangued Bartlett. The president did not

²⁹ OCMH, CDC, 8-2.8 NI, "Nicaraguan war effort," 25-27. For a discussion of Central American politics from 1944 to 1947 see Leonard, 1984.

³⁰ OCMH, CDC 8-2.8 NI, "Nicaraguan war effort," 23-25; USNA, RG 165, OPD 336, Nicaragua, October 7, 1944 and November 9, 1944; and USNA, RG 338, CDC, Decimal File 400.145, Contracts and Lend-Lease (General), July 19, 1944.

"doubt the good will or sincere intentions of General Brett or the War Department," but was convinced that the "State Department is blocking every military request I make." Although satisfied with the results of the recently completed bilateral conversations, Somoza doubted "that we will be given even a pocket knife since we might cut ourselves with it." He scoffed at the arrangement whereby military ammunition and supplies would be made available only for the Military Academy, and then only after requests were made to CDC Headquarters at Panama. He was offended by the shipment of airplanes to other Latin American countries, while he could not even receive trainers.

I refuse to beg any more or be humiliated any further. I will not bargain [...] I want the United States to show us a demonstration of their good will and not treat us as inferiors or put us in the same class as the Guatemalan and Salvadoran revolutionaries. I won't do anything more until the situation is clear and the United States stops treating us worse than less friendly countries. I've done more for United States interests in Central America than its own State Department has and I don't understand the State Department at all.³¹

In this atmosphere, the U.S. military mission contract expired on May 21, 1945 and was not renewed for a two-year period. However, the lapsed contract did not prevent Somoza from seeking training for *Guardia* cadets in Panama. Failing in this effort, in October 1945 Somoza requested that the U.S. military mission establish a jungle warfare training center in Nicaragua. The State Department advised the CDC "to find an excuse for refusing this time the Nicaraguan President's request."³²

Initially the War and State Departments used global issues to brush aside the requests for an expanded mission and the increased supply of military equipment. In spring 1945 the War Department confronted a war-torn Europe and a continuing conflict in Asia. The State Department suggested that postwar military planning await the outcome of disarmament discussions by the newly established United Nations. These explanations only masked a more serious concern: that Somoza

³¹ USNA, RG 165, OPD 336, Nicaragua, July 20, 1945.

³² USNA, RG 165, OPD 336, Nicaragua, August 29, 1945 and September 10, 1945; and USNA, RG 165, OPD 336, Nicaragua, 8-23/2408 F/W 22 "Chronology."

intended to use the military equipment to suppress his political opponents. For example, in Managua, Ambassador Fletcher Warren reported that the training of *Guardia* cadets in Panama would only enhance their effectiveness in protecting Somoza. Even Bartlett could not guarantee that rifles and ammunition delivered to the Military Academy would not find their way to the *Guardia*. And Major Frederick B. Judson, the Acting Military Attaché at the U.S. Embassy, cautioned that the current political turmoil prompted Somoza "to arm his *Guardia* as well as possible."³³

The discussion regarding military assistance to Nicaragua reflected a larger policy debate in Washington where the State Department refused to give any support to the Central American dictators. As early as 1943 the Assistant Chief of the American Republics Affairs Division, John M. Cabot, recognized that Hernández Martínez's request for 1,000 submachine guns under the Lend-Lease program was for "lethal toys [that are] more likely to be used for a very different purpose than they were intended." In early 1945 Acting Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew recognized that Anastasio Somoza's request for 10,000 rifles to keep communism out of Nicaragua was a hoax. In both instances the State Department understood that the real intention was to suppress political opposition. At the time of the bilateral staff conversations in the spring of 1945, the State Department had in place a clear policy of not supplying arms to dictators in Central America. "We cannot be accused either by our own people or by the dictators's victims of supporting or making possible the continuance of dictatorships through supplying arms susceptible of use by a dictator against his own people."³⁴ Given this policy, neither Honduras or Nicaragua received any military assistance through 1947. For the same reasons, the State Department opposed requests from the Caribbean Defense Command for a threefold increase in the arms allotments to the Central American countries and the sale of spare parts for commercial aircraft in Honduras and Nicaragua in 1946. That same year the State Department advised against any future sale of bomber planes to the Central American governments for fear that they might be used against civilian populations or to settle border disputes among them.

³³ USNA, RG 59, Lot Files, Nicaragua, April 25, 1945, June 26, 1945 and July 4, 1945.

³⁴ FRUS, 1943, vol. VI, 309-310; FRUS, 1945, vol. IX, 1321-1322; and Roosevelt Library, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Confidential File, "Justice, Lend-Lease and State."

Given the State Department's reluctant attitude by July 1946, not a single piece of surplus equipment had been sold to any Latin American government (except for 1,000 pistols to Mexico) and the price list for all material was still tentative. Within Central America, an articulate body of opposition began to develop, reasoning like the State Department, that increased weaponry only served political purposes.³⁵

Furthermore, to prevent the War and Navy Departments from expanding their personnel in any given country through temporary assignments and then including them in subsequent formal accords, the State Department gained the right to approve all military officers assigned to a country.³⁶

In contrast to the State Department, the CDC remained confident that Congress understood the need for long-range postwar planning and the need to provide for hemispheric security. The CDC expected congressional approval of a large-scale military assistance program for all Latin America. To do otherwise, CDC Assistant Chief of Staff for G-2 Colonel Howard Eager warned, "would result in a loss of U.S. prestige in the area and have adverse repercussions on future military cooperation."³⁷ In anticipation of that approval, the CDC began to estimate the number and the cost of training schools it would need for Central American military personnel and began the development of a process for the selection of officers for advanced training in the United States. Until Congress approved the proposed military assistance program, the CDC drew upon available surplus material for demonstration purposes and suggested that the Central American governments purchase surplus material for cash, cash which Central American governments, however, lacked.³⁸

President Harry S. Truman introduced legislation in 1946 that would have achieved the Army's postwar defense planning. But Congress had become as reluctant as the State Department. When

³⁵ USNA, Record Group 59, Office of American Republic Affairs, Box 10, Memorandums June 25, 1945, September 26, 1945, October 3, 1945; Box 11, Memorandum March 14, 1946; Box 12, Memorandum July 17, 1946, August 15, 1946, November 1, 1946 and November 18, 1946 [Hereafter referred to as ARA].

³⁶ USNA, RG 165, OPD 336 Latin America (General), June 28, 1945; RG 165, OPD 336, Nicaragua, February 8, 1945, March 24, 1945, March 26, 1945 and August 29, 1945.

³⁷ USNA, Caribbean Defense Command, CDC 092 (BLC), Colonel Howard Eager, "Report on South American Trip," May 10, 1945.

³⁸ CDC 8.2-8, Bilateral Staff Conversations, 160-166.

Congress failed to consider the Inter-American Military Cooperation Act, the State Department recommended a reconsideration of the entire program. The Department pointed out that the cost, originally estimated at \$ 75 million now approached one billion dollars, a price tag that Latin America's fragile economies could not afford and, at a time when each still owed for Lend-Lease materials. The State Department anticipated an arms race at a time when social progress and improved living standards were considered more important to hemispheric security than military equipment. Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson also noted that the atomic bomb raised questions about the strategic value and cost of an inter-American military program.³⁹

Truman re-introduced the legislation in the spring of 1947, confident that there would be no Latin American arms race, that the plan fell within the framework of the Act of Chapultepec and that there would not be a struggle to create a balance of power in Latin America. Congress remained unimpressed and again refused the president's request.⁴⁰

Given the failure of the U.S. Congress to approve the proposed military assistance program over the War Department's protests, when the nations of the western hemisphere ratified the 1947 Treaty of Rio de Janeiro that provided for action by all contracting nations against an armed attack on any American republic, no provision for implementation was included. The inter-American defense mechanism was not in place.⁴¹

³⁹ FRUS, 1946, vol. XI, 86-110 and 955-968; *Papers of Harry S. Truman*, 1946 (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1962), "Special message to Congress transmitting bill for inter-American military cooperation, May 6, 1946," 233-235; and *Inter-American military cooperation act*, Hearings Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, May 28 and 29, 1946, 79th Congress, 2nd session.

⁴⁰ *Papers of Harry S. Truman*, 1947, "Special message to Congress on military Arms standardization with other American states, May 26, 1947," 255-257; *Inter-American military cooperation act*, Hearings Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, June 23, 25, 26 and July 2, 1947; 80th Congress, 1st session; *Executive sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (Historical Series) 80th Congress, 1st and 2nd sessions (published 1976); and selected *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1943-1950*, vol. III, Part 1 (published, 1976).

⁴¹ *Report of the Delegation of the United States of American, Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Continental Peace and Security*, Quitandinha, Brazil August 15-September 2, 1947 (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1948); and Pan American Union, *Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Continental Peace and Security*, Rio de Janeiro, August 15-September 2, 1947 (Washington, D.C., Pan American Union, 1947).

As the Cold War dawned in 1947, the inter-American defense system remained an elusive vision. Further progress was made at the Ninth International Conference of American States meeting at Bogotá, Colombia, in 1948, but not until 1951 did the U.S. Congress approve military assistance to Latin America. Until then, the Central American governments found some solace with the acquisition of limited surplus equipment through the U.S. military missions in each country.⁴²

CONCLUSION

Historical evidence leads to the conclusion that the United States did not pursue a policy of fostering the development of Nicaragua's National Guard except to place it within the context of World War II and postwar defense strategies. Those strategies focused upon securing the region from external attack, and implied a rigorous training for Nicaraguan soldiers in the discipline and military techniques requisite to resisting external aggression until the arrival of U.S. troops. With that accomplished by late 1943, the CDC, having learned an important lesson from the war, sought the introduction of military aircraft to help with Caribbean patrols. The CDC sought the postwar training of officers in the United States so that the Nicaraguan military could mesh with the U.S. defense strategy. Beyond training, little of the military equipment introduced into Nicaragua's Military Academy during the war reached the *Guardia*. Otherwise, Somoza would not have consistently complained about the *Guardia's* outdated and poorly functioning rifles and the need for new ones.

Significantly, U.S. embassy and military personnel in Managua and State Department officers in Washington understood that Somoza wanted the modern equipment for the *Guardia* in order to deal more effectively with his political opponents. Somoza was not alone. Other Latin American strongmen had similar intentions. The majority of congressmen understood this and therefore refused to implement the

⁴² Studies placing Latin America within the framework of U.S. Cold War strategy include: Molineu, 1990; Mecham, 1963; Baily, 1975; Langley, 1989; Kryzanek, 1985; Connell-Smith, 1974; and Smith, 1996. For a discussion of United States postwar military assistance see Pach, 1991.

military assistance program in the years immediately after World War II.

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