

**SOVIET BLOC MILITARY EQUIPMENT
SUPPLIED TO NICARAGUA
(July 1979 - June 1988)**

The Sandinista regime came to power with the overthrow of Anastasio Somoza in July 1979. In 1980, the Sandinistas began receiving military aid from the Soviet Bloc with a modest \$10 million dollars worth of aid received during that first year. Since then, the Sandinista government has received a total of 126,100 metric tons of military equipment with an estimated value of nearly 2 1/2 billion U.S. dollars from Soviet bloc nations. This Communist injection of military aid has enabled the Sandinistas to field and equip the largest and most powerful armed force in Central America. Major items of military equipment in the Sandinista inventory are:

| | |
|----------|---|
| 150 | Tanks |
| 250 | Other Armored Vehicles |
| 500+ | Surface-to-Air Missile Launchers (Reloadable) |
| 700+ | Air Defense Guns |
| 400+ | Anti-Tank Guns |
| 90 | Artillery/Heavy Mortars |
| 50 | Helicopters (includes 12 MI-24/25 HIND "flying tanks" and about 40 MI-8/17 HIP combat transports) |
| 35 | Fixed Wing Aircraft |
| 36 | Multiple Rocket Launchers |
| 6000 | Trucks |
| 20 | Patrol Boats |
| 1 | Amphibious Craft |
| 8 | Minesweepers |
| Numerous | Radar Installations |
| 4 | Communications Intercept Facilities |

The total Sandinista military force (120,000+ regulars, reserves, militia and security forces) is almost as large as the combined military forces of the four Central American democracies (131,840). The Sandinista active duty force (regulars plus mobilized reserves/militia and security forces) totals some 80,000, again the largest such military force in Central America (El Salvador/43,600; Guatemala/36,000; Honduras/17,250; Costa Rica/8,000 constabulary force only).

The following are known Communist state and/or anti-U.S. suppliers of military and economic aid and assistance to the Sandinistas:

| | | |
|--------|----------|---------------------------|
| USSR | Bulgaria | North Korea |
| Cuba | Vietnam | East Germany |
| Poland | Romania | Peoples Republic of China |

Libya PLO

There is a large contingent of foreign military advisors supporting the Sandinista military establishment, principally in the fields of combat arms, intelligence/internal security and supply/maintenance/logistics functions. The Cuban advisor effort (over 2,000) is the largest; the USSR provides 50-75 advisors with another 200+ coming from the combined efforts of the East Bloc nations and periodically from Third World sources such as North Korea, Libya and the PLO.

SANDINISTA PORT FACILITIES

Soviet/bloc ship deliveries of military supplies and equipment to Nicaraguan ports have totaled 126,100 metric tons (estimated value \$2.475 billion U.S. dollars) since aid first began to arrive in 1980.

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Arms Shipments</u> | <u>Metric Tons</u> | <u>Estimated Value (Million US \$)</u> |
|---------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--|
| 1980 | -- | 1.6 | 10 |
| 1981 | 2 | 9.4 | 160 |
| 1982 | 6 | 11.2 | 140 |
| 1983 | 25 | 13.9 | 250 |
| 1984 | 37 | 20.0 | 370 |
| 1985 | 35 | 20.8 | 280 |
| 1986 | 50 | 22.0 | 600 |
| 1987 | 62 | 21.7 | 505 |
| 1988 (1 June) | 23 | 5.5 | 160 |

To date there have been no port calls by Soviet or Bloc combatant vessels to Nicaragua. Nevertheless, the possibility that the Soviets may have access to Nicaragua's ports is a troublesome possibility for defense planning.

There are no known submarine facilities existing or under construction in Nicaragua.

The principal Sandinista port facilities are Corinto, El Bluff and Rama.

Corinto

Corinto, located on the Pacific Ocean side of Nicaragua, can accommodate conventional merchant/cargo ships and roll-on/roll-

off (RO/RO vessels. The main pier is 380 meters long and the port can accommodate ships up to 20,000 dead weight tons. The port is large enough to allow the largest Soviet surface combatants (the KIEV-class V/STOL carrier) to dock. Corinto could also accommodate limited numbers of Soviet missile or attack submarines, together with submarine support ships.

El Bluff

El Bluff, located on the Atlantic/Caribbean side of Nicaragua, can accommodate limited numbers of cargo, tanker and RO/RO vessels. The Sandinistas are in the process of adding two new wharves of 180 and 200 meters in length. When complete, the port will be able to accommodate vessels of up to 25,000 dead weight tons. Cargo handling facilities will include RO/RO ramps and liquid cargo handling equipment. The port can now accommodate limited numbers of Soviet frigates and smaller vessels, including patrol boats and intelligence collectors, but probably not submarines.

Rama

Rama, located up river from El Bluff, serves as the way station and distribution point for goods received at El Bluff destined for the interior of Nicaragua. Rama can accommodate limited numbers of cargo and RO/RO vessels and could accommodate Soviet frigates and smaller vessels, but not submarines.

SANDINISTA AIRFIELDS

The Sandinistas have seven principle airfields capable of supporting military operations by fixed wing aircraft and helicopters. The airfields and their runway lengths are:

| <u>AIRFIELD</u> | <u>RUNWAY LENGTH (METERS)</u> | <u>REMARKS</u> |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Punta Huete | 3,000+ | nearing full operational status |
| Sandino International | 3,000+ | civilian/military use |
| Bluefields | 2,000-3,000 | |
| Montelimar | 2,000-3,000 | |
| Puerto Cabezas | 2,000-3,000 | |
| La Rosita | 1,000-2,000 | |
| Esteli | 1,000-2,000 | |

In 1982, with Cuban assistance, the Sandinistas began constructing the Punta Huete airfield. The principal runway at

Punta Huete is 10,000 feet in length. It can accommodate any aircraft in the Soviet inventory. Soviet reconnaissance planes flying out of Punta Huete would be able to fly missions along the U.S. Pacific Coast just as they now reconnoiter the U.S. Atlantic Coast from Cuba.

All Soviet tactical fighter-bombers, intermediate-range bombers and long-range bombers could use Nicaraguan airfields, although some aircraft would be restricted to use of those airfields with runways over 2,000 meters (6,500 feet) in length.

No aircraft in the current Nicaraguan inventory is capable of flying combat missions against targets in the U.S. If introduced into Nicaragua, Soviet tactical fighter-bombers could attack targets in the Central American and Caribbean area, including the Panama Canal and the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic sea lanes (see Regional Maps). Soviet intermediate-range or long-range bombers operating from Nicaragua would threaten the continental United States, with the combat radius of the TU-95 Bear covering all of North America. The potential for Soviet military use of Nicaragua complicates U.S. defense planning. In a crisis situation the United States could be compelled to divert resources to counter such a possibility.

SOVIET AIRCRAFT CHARACTERISTICS:

| <u>AIRCRAFT</u> | <u>COMBAT RADIUS (mi)</u> | <u>MAX PAYLOAD</u> | <u>NUCLEAR CAPABLE</u> |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| MIG-21 FISHBED | 465 | 1,000 KG Bombs | Y |
| MIG-23 FLOGGER | 750 | 3,000 KG Bombs | Y |
| MIG-27 FLOGGER | 375 | 3,000 KG Bombs | Y |
| MIG-31 FOXHOUND | 1300 | 8 X Air-to-Air Missiles | N |
| SU-17 FITTER | 340 | 3,000 KG Bombs | Y |
| SU-24 FENCER | 800 | 3,000 KG Bombs | Y |
| SU-25 FROGFOOT | 186 | 2,000 KG Bombs | N |
| TU-16 BADGER | 1925 | 9,000 KG Bombs, Air-to-Surface Missiles | Y |
| TU-22 BACKFIRE | 2500 | 12,000 KG Bombs, ASM | Y |
| TU-95 BEAR | 5150 | 12,000 KG Bombs, ASM | Y |
| TU-95 BEAR H | 5150 | Cruise Missiles | Y |

Note: The MIG-21 and MIG-23 are currently in the Cuban arsenal. There are none in Nicaragua, as yet.

SANDINISTA RADAR AND COMMUNICATIONS INTERCEPT FACILITIES

With Soviet and Cuban assistance, the Sandinistas have developed an extensive military radar system. Fixed facilities such as those at Masaya, Toro Blanco, Esteli and El Polvon-- together with mobile systems--provide radar coverage over most of Nicaragua. The Sandinistas can monitor aircraft movements far off their coasts and deep into Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica. The Sandinista radar system provides them with surveillance, early warning, target acquisition and ground-control intercept capabilities. There is no other comparable radar system anywhere in the region.

In like manner, the Sandinistas have also acquired four communications intercept facilities from the Soviets, the first being established at Santa Maria, near Managua, in 1982. Other intercept sites are located at Puerto Cabezas, San Francisco, and Santa Rosa.