A Growing Embassy Reflects Role in Area

BY BARBARA CROSSETTE

TEGUICALPA, Honduras, July 19 — The United States Embassy in Honduras, once a Foreign Service backwater, has over the last two years become the largest and most important American mission in Central America.

To Hondurans and foreign diplomats in this capital, the embassy—now a large and well-fortified buildings facing each other across one of Tegucigalpa’s main thoroughfares—has become the symbol of the rapidly growing American presence in Honduras, the country that is now the focal point of Washington’s policy in the region.

It is from Honduras, Western diplomats and Honduran opposition politicians say, that the Reagan Administration is waging a psychological, economic and military campaign against the Sandinista Government of neighboring Nicaragua.

By the embassy’s own count, the United States now has close to 200 military attaches, technicians and engineers in Honduras, not counting the eight officers and nine enlisted men attached to the military attaché’s office and the Military Assistance Group.

The embassy staff numbers over 140, at least 28 of them with diplomatic rank. Most other missions here, according to American diplomats, have fewer than six foreign service officers. Washington also has a squad of experienced Ambassador, John D. Negroponte, who is often rumored to be under consideration for higher policy-making posts in the Reagan Administration.

Eighteen months ago the embassy was upgraded from a Class 4 to a Class 2 mission, putting it on a par with United States embassies in such cities as Bordeaux, Almaty, Athens, Acapulco, Mexico City and Brasilia, Class I embassies, outliers in Latin America. The United States is not a permanent American staff employee and 100 temporary duty personnel, including military advisors training Salvadoran Army troops fighting against the guerrillas.

In addition to the other Americans in Honduras, a large agricultural mission, composed of 15 to 20 influencers, American business leaders, has been in and out of the country recently to advise Honduras on how to develop its underexploited natural resources. An American legal commission is also counseling Honduras on how to begin a review of the country’s archaic penal code.

The Agency for International Development employs a number of American consultants here, and more than 20 Peace Corps volunteers are scattered throughout the country.

Expelled by Honduras

Mr. Rivera, who said the Hondurans expelled him from the country in June because of his decision, said he believed it was the Honduran Army under General Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, the military "force" chief, who was giving orders to the Honduran-based guerrillas on the border of the United States. He added that he believed the Honduran Army was serving as the "conduit" for the United States aid to the rebels. This would permit the Americans to remain only indirectly involved with the guerrilla forces.

A spokesman for the Honduran-based rebels confirmed that he, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force was being "advised"—sometimes badly, he said—by the Hondurans. The Honduran Government has repeatedly denied that the army is involved with the guerrillas or that the rebels are operating from Honduran territory.

The cultivation of Honduras as a base of operations against Nicaragua is part of American foreign policy goals. The United States, as of last year, has been training Honduran forces for several years to combat guerrillas in Nicaragua. Since then, several American military observers have been stationed in El Salvador to assist the Honduran Army in its battle against the Sandinistas.
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It is from Honduras, Western diplomats and Honduran opposition politicians say, that the Reagan Administration is waging a psychological, economic and military campaign against the Sandinista Government of neighboring Nicaragua.

By the embassy's own count, the United States now has close to 500 military, civilian, technical and engineering personnel in Honduras, not counting the eight officers and nine enlisted men attached to the military attaché's office, and the Military Assistance Group.

The embassy staff numbers over 150, at least 33 of them with diplomatic rank. Most other foreign missions here, according to American diplomats, have fewer than six foreign service officers. Washington also has a strong and experienced Ambassador, Dr. John S. D. Kerr, and his Deputy, Dr. John B. Wilkes, both of whom are thought to be important players in the Administration's Central American policy.

In addition to the other Americans in Honduras, a large agricultural mission, consisting of 15 to 20 volunteer American business leaders, has been operating in the country recently to advise and counsel Hondurans on how to develop the country's unripe rural resources. An American legal commission is also advising the Honduran government on how to improve its public service.

The Agency for International Development employs a number of American consultants here, and more than 20 Peace Corps volunteers are scattered throughout the country.

The Salvadorans in Training

Of the American military personnel publicly acknowledged to be in Honduras, are members of the Seventh Special Forces, or Green Berets, who were giving orders to and training Salvadoran troops at an American installation still under construction at Puerto Cortes on the country's Caribbean coast.

About 30 members of the United States Army Corps of Engineers are extending a runway at Carayagua, north of the city, and permit the Honduran army to be working on a radar site about 12 miles southeast of the city.

AVERAGE of 50 American military advisors are attached to the Honduran armed forces; the number can rise higher at any time, according to the embassy. Congress has not tried to limit the number of advisors in Honduras, as it has done in El Salvador.

The United States Military Assistance Group staff, which supervises the Mission, is small and remaining small. The military officials in the Mission, as in El Salvador, are U.S. military personnel.

Freelance Pilots Reported

American and Honduran officials say that however large the American military presence is, it is dwarfed by the number of Cuban and Soviet advisors in Nicaragua. Honduras's Foreign Minister, Edgardo Paz Barrientez, says there are some 10,000 Cubans, Russians and Eastern European in Nicaragua. The Nicara- guan Government says there are only a few thousand and that many of them are engaged in civilian projects.

A "soldier" of the United States Intelligence Service, who has traveled to the area of fighting in northern Nicaragua as a freelance pilot, says that he has sometimes flown as high as 40,000 feet.

Both the Reagan Administration and the anti-Sandinista guerrillas deny that American servicemen are directly involved in the fighting in Nicaragua, although they acknowledge that financial and material help has come from Washington.

"We never had even one American trained in El Salvador who is a pilot of the rebel's Nicaraguan Democratic Forces, said an interview here in Managua. But we have plenty of people who have been to Fort Bragg, Fort Knox and Fort Bragg.

"Dr. Chamorro also said that his forces had regular contact with Americans and that their equipment was "from the United States." But he denied that there were any American servicemen advising or fighting with the rebels. Mr. Rivera broke last year with the United States-based rebels because of the preponderance in their leadership of members of the national guard of Anastasio Somoza Debayle. He has since allied his Indian organization, Misuwi, with the other major rebel group, the National Liberation Army, which is fighting the Sandinistas from the Costa Rican side.

Recalled by Honduras

Mr. Rivera, who said the Hondurans had expelled him from the country last June because of his "decisions," said he believed he was the Honduran Army under Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, the armed forces' chief, who had no one else to turn to except the United States-based guerrillas on behalf of the United States. He added that he believed the Hondurans were serving as the conduit for United States aid to the rebels. This would provide the Hondurans with an indirect way of getting involved with the guerrillas.

A spokesman for the Honduran-based rebels confirmed here that the Nicaraga- guan Democratic Forces was being "advised" — sometimes badly, he said — by the Hondurans. The Honduran Government has repeatedly denied that its army is involved with the guerrillas or that the rebel is actually operating from Honduran territory.

The cultivation of Honduras as a base of operations against Nicaragua has lured diplomats, analysts and military experts to the area with the possibility that the Honduran army, as it has done in El Salvador, might be used as a base of operations against Nicaragua.

Civilian Rule Prioritized

According to diplomats, the Carter and Reagan Administrations pressed Honduras and Guatemala to return to civilian rule so that they could be held up as examples of a democratic alternative. Both countries held national elections last year, but the voting was marred by accusations of fraud and voter intimidation.

The United States, which had previously brought Gen. Rivas to power, had held elections last year, but the voting was marred by accusations of fraud and voter intimidation.

The elections were seen here as more in a series of attempts to control what some American officials have considered to be a threat to the economy and political system in the region.

Many diplomats here are skeptical that the United States can succeed, in either a military or an economic sense, in bringing Nicaragua or strengthening Honduras to stand on its own as a strong and viable country.

Mr. Rivera said that if the United States is to remain in the region, he would first like to see the United States aid to the United States-based rebels reduced, and then to see the United States military personnel involved in the area.

Corruption Is Prevalent

In an interview here in Managua last June, Mr. Rivera, a former member of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, said he was the Honduran military under Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, the armed forces' chief, who had no one else to turn to except the United States-based guerrillas on behalf of the United States. He added that he believed the Hondurans were serving as the conduit for United States aid to the rebels. This would provide the Hondurans with an indirect way of getting involved with the guerrillas.

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BY BARBARA CROSSETTE

The New York Times

TEGUICAPALPA, Honduras, July 19 — The United States Embassy in Hon-
duras and the Foreign Service backwater, has over the last two years become the largest and most important American military presence, is the dwar- ner of Cuban and Soviet advisers in Nicaragua. The embassy, one of the main bases for Nicaragua, the U.S. ultimate in Mexico, says that there are over 100,000 Cubans and Russians and small European presence in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan Government says that there may only be a few thousand and that many of them are engaged in civilian projects. It is harder to measure are the numbers of American citizens involved in the guerrilla war being waged against Nicaragua from Honduras. There are reports here and in Nicaragua of American freelancing has really been a substantial number in Central America — working with the anti-Sandinista guerrillas.

The Washington Post has reported that the Nicaragua-based forces have joined the Honduran-based forces through recruitment drives in Miami. Both the Reagan Administration and the anti-Sandinista guerrillas deny that American servicemen are directly involved. They, however, acknowledge that financial and material help has come from Washing- ton.

"We never had even one American trainer," Edgar Chamorro, a leader of the rebels' Nicaragua Democratic Forces, said in an interview here recently. "We don't need trainers. We have plenty of people who have been to Fort Bragg, Fort Knox and Fort Guli-

Chamorro also said that his forces had regular contact with American intelligence agents, but that these agents were "sent down from Washing- ton" rather than attached to the State Department. He does not enumerate or identify members of intelligence services, citing the need for secrecy in their operations.

In an interview last week in San José, Costa Rica, Brooklyn Rivera, a leader of Nicaraguan Miskito Indian exiles who are also involved with the government, said that during his time in Honduras working with the anti-Sandinista forces he had not encountered American servicemen advising or fighting with the rebels. Mr. Rivera said that his only contact with American rebels because of the preponder- ance in their leadership of foreign-born Cubans.

He has since allied his Indian organization, Miskito, with the Sandinista National Liberation Front. He has denounced the U.S. and the United States government.

Several diplomatic posts in Central America also said that when the United States, as part of its economic pressure on Nicaragua, recently reduced Man- gua's sugar quota and gave the additional amount to Honduras, one or two wealthy Honduran families promptly cornered the market.

"The aid flows directly back to Miami," a diplomat said.
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Saturday, July 23, 1983

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It is from Honduras, Western Diplomats and Honduran opposition politicians say, that the Reagan Administration's economic and military campaign against the Sandinista Government of neighboring Nicaragua is being waged.

By the embassy's own count, the United States now has close to 300 military personnel, technicians and engineers in Honduras, not counting the eight officers and nine enlisted men attached to the military attaché's office and the Military Assistance Group.

The embassy staff numbers over 140, at least 30 of them with diplomatic rank. Most other foreign missions here, according to American diplomats, have fewer than six foreign service officers.

Washington also has a strong and experienced ambassador, John D. Negroponte, who is often rumored to be under consideration for higher policy-making posts in the Reagan Administration.

Eighteen months ago the embassy was upgraded from a Class 4 to a Class 2 mission, putting it on a par with the United States embassies in such cities as Lima and Buenos Aires. Only those in Mexico City, Brasilia, Class 1 embassies, or Latin America.

The embassy in El Salvador has 102 permanent American staff employees and 100 temporary duty personnel, including the military attaché's column of Salvadoran Army troops fighting against the guerrillas there.

In addition to the other Americans in Honduras, there is a large agricultural mission, and the government of the country recently to advise and guide the Hondurans on how to develop the country's unpeopled rural resources.

An American legal commission is also counselling Honduras as they begin a review of the country's atomic penal code.

The Agency for International Developing is a number of American consultants here, and more than 20 Peace Corps volunteers are scattered throughout the country.

Salvadors in Training

The American military personnel, who publicly acknowledged to be some 120 are members of the Seventh Special Forces, or Green Berets, who are training Salvadoran troops at an American installation in the country's Caribbean coast.

Almost 60 members of the United States Army Corps of Engineers are extending a runway at Comayagua, northwest of Tegucigalpa. Sixty Americans are working on a radar site about 12 miles southwest of the city.

An average of 50 American military advisors are attached to the Honduran armed forces; the number can go higher or lower at any time, according to the embassy. Congress has not tried to limit the number of advisors in Honduras as it has done in El Salvador.

The United States Military Assistance Group staff, which supervises local defense, has four officers and five en- nies, including the Ministry of Agriculture and special services.

Freelance Pilots Reported

American and Honduran officials say that however large the American military presence in Honduras, it is dwarfed by the number of Cuban and Soviet advisors in Nicaragua. Honduras's Foreign Minister, Edgardo Paz Barnica, says there are 17,000 Cubans, Russians and Eastern Europeans in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan Government says that there are only a few thousand and that many of them are engaged in civil works.

Harder to measure are the numbers of American citizens involved in the guerrilla war being waged against Nicaragua from Honduras. There are reports here and in Nicaragua of American freelance pilots — who have always been a substantial number in Central America — working with the anti-Sandinista guerrillas.

Journalists who have traveled to the area of fighting in northern Nicaragua, as well as some Western diplomats here, also believe that an unknown number of Spanish-speaking Americans of Cuban and Mexican descent have privately joined the Honduran-based forces through recruitment drives in Miami.

Both the Reagan Administration and the anti-Sandinista guerrillas say that American services have been directly involved in the fighting in Nicaragua, although they acknowledge that financial and material help has come from Washington.

"We never had even one American trained, 'Edgar Chomorro Correa, a leader of the rebels,' Nicaraguan Democratic Forces, said in an interview here. "We don't need your help. We have plenty of people who have been to Fort Bragg, Fort Hood and Fort Gal- lick."

Dr. Chomorro also said that his forces had regular contact with United States Intelligence agencies, but that these agencies were "sent down from Washington" rather than attached to the United States Embassy here. Embassies do not communicate or identify members of intelligence services, citing the safety of the people involved and the need for secrecy in their operations.

In an interview last week in San José, Costa Rica, Brooklyn Rivera, a leader of Nicaraguan Marxist Indians in Honduras, said that he is also in touch with the government in Managua, that during this time in Honduras working with the Sandinista rebels, he had not encountered any American servicemen advising or fighting with the rebels. Rivera said he believed the Honduras were serving as the conduit for United States aid to the rebels. This would permit the Americans to remain only indirectly involved with the guerrilla forces.

A spokesman for the Honduras-based rebels confirmed here that the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces were being "advised" — sometimes badly, he said — by the Hondurans. The Honduran Government has repeatedly denied that its army is involved with the guerrillas on that the rebels are operating from Honduras territory.

The cultivation of Honduras as a base of operations against Nicaragua has been part of American foreign policy since the years of President Carter, acc- epted, as a "complementary approach" to the invasion of Grenada.

According to diplomats, the Carter and the Reagan Administrations, and the Hondurans and Guatemalans to return to civil roles so that they could be led as examples of a democratic alternative. Both countries held national elections last year, but the voting was annulled in Guatemala by the military that ultimately brought Gen. Efrain Rios Montt to power.

The exception was Costa Rica, a new democracy. But Costa Rica was ruled out, diplomats say, because of its unwillingness to take sides and the strength of its democratic-socialist tradition.

Corruption Is Prevailing

In addition, the diplomat said, increased economic aid to Honduras is likely to be swallowed up by a pervasive corruption. As examples of a democratic society, the workers and peasants of Nicaragua, who have not eaten for years, the唯有 Honduran children and found that once it was in the hands of the Hondurans very little reached those who needed it.

Several diplomats working in Central America also said that the United States as part of its economic pressure on Nicaragua, recently reduced Managua's sugar quota and gave the additional ton of sugar to Honduras, one of the two wealthy Honduran families promptly cornered the market.

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The embassy staff numbers over 140, at least 10 of them have been in diplo-
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Washington also has a long and ex-
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The embassy in El Salvador has 65
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An American legal commission is also counseling Hondurans as they begin a
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The Agency for International De-
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Corps volunteers are scattered through the
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Of the 120 American military personnel currently acknowledged to be in Hon-
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Harder to measure are the numbers of American citizens involved in the
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Journalists who have traveled to
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Both the Reagan Administration and the anti-Sandinista guerrillas say that
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“We have never had even one American
trainer,” Edgar Chamorro Correal, a
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Dr. Chamorro also said that his forces had regular contacts with Ameri-
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He said that the United States Embassy here. Embassies do not comment or identify members of intel-
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In an interview last week in San Jose,
Costa Rica, Brooklyn Rivera, a leader of Nicaraguan Miskito Indians, who are also in revolt against the Gov-
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The cultivation of Honduras as a base of operations against Nicaragua has
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Many diplomats here are skeptical
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A Western European diplomat said in an interview that the wearer of democ-
acy in Nicaragua was already under
the influence of the human resources of the country so badly neglected, that only,enormous commitment in terms of both the time and investment of the U.S. would bring success.

The currency of the country would begin to attack its problems. There is no indi-
ca that the United States Congress would ever permit the White House that latitude.

Corruption Is Prevalent

In addition, the diplomat said, in-
creased economic aid to Honduras is likely to encourage the pervasive system of corruption in the private sec-
sector. He said the European Community and the I.M.F. are both consid-
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Both the Reagan Administration
and the anti-Sandinista guerrillas deny
that American servicemen are directly
involved in the fighting in Nicaragua,
although they acknowledge that finan-
cial and material help has come from Wash-
ington.
"We never had even one American
trainer," Edgar Chomorro Cornelli, a
leader of the rebels' Nicaraguan Demo-
cratic Forces, said in an interview he
recently. "We don't need them.
We have plenty of people who have been
to Fort Bragg. Fort Knox and Fort
G Gilbert.
"Dr. Chomorro also said that his
forces had regular contacts with Ameri-
can intelligence agents, but that these
agents were "sent down from Washing-
ton" rather than attached to the United
States Embassy here. Embassadors do
not supervise or identify members of int-
elligence services, citing that the French
people involved and the need for se-
crecy in their operations.
In an interview last week in San Jose,
Costa Rica, Brooklyn Rivera, a leader
of Nicaraguan Misión Indian exiles
who are also in revolt against the Gov-
ernment in Managua, said that during
his time in Honduras working with the
Sandinistas he had not encountered
any American servicios men advising or
fighting with the rebels. Mr. Rivera
broke last year with the Honduran-
based rebels because of the preponder-
ance in their leadership of non-Fre-
cist de la Nomad Sandino Frente. He has
since allied his Indian organization, Múnaga in,
the forces of Edén Pastora Gómez, who is
fighting the Nicaraguans from the
Costa Rican side.
Expelled by Honduras
Mr. Rivera, who said the Hondurans
expelled him from the country last June
because of his decision, said he believed
he was the Honduran Army under Gen
Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, the armed
forces chief, who was giving orders to the
Hondurans-based guerrillas on be-
half of the United States. He added that
he believed the Hondurans were serving
as the conduit for United States aid to
the rebels. This would mean that Ameri-
cans to remain only indirectly in-
volved with the guerrilla forces.
A spokesman for the Honduran-based
rebels confirmed here that the Nicara-
guan Democratic Forces was being "ad-
vising" — sometimes badly, he said —
by the Hondurans. The Honduran
Government repeatedly denied that the
Army was involved with the guerrillas or
that the rebels are operating from Hon-
duras territory.
The cultivation of Honduras as a base
of operations against Nicaragua has
been part of American foreign policy
since the years of President Carter, ac-
ccording to American and European dip-
lomats with long service in the area.
According to their analyses, the United
States realized after the fall of the
Somos dictatorship in 1979 that the
Sandinista Government in Nicaragua
had the potential for spreading rebel-
lics in Central America. Washington
then began to cast about for allies in the
area, but saw only military govern-
ments with which it would be politically
safest to cooperate.
The exception was Costa Rica, a
strong democracy. But Costa Rica was
ruled out, diplomats say, because of its
unwillingness to take sides and the stren-
th of its democratic-socialist tradi-
ions.
Civilian Rule Pressed
According to diplomats, the Carter
and Reagan Administrations pressed
Honduras and Guatemala to return to
civilian rule so that they could be held
up as examples of a democratic alter-
native. Both countries hold national
elections next year, but the voting was
annulled in Guatemala by the coup
that ultimately brought Gen. Efrain Rios
Monte to power.
That left Honduras, a poor but largely
peaceful country. As Honduras has
grown as Washington's base of opera-
tions in the area, the United States has
increasingly contributed to the develop-
ment of the country. The appointment of
a commission headed by Henry A. Kissin-
gger is seen here as one more to a series
of efforts to confront what successive
American administrations have con-
cluded were huge social and economic
problems in the region.
Many diplomats here are skeptical
that the United States can succeed, in
either a military or economic sense, in
isolating Nicaragua or strengthening
Honduras to stand on its own as a strong
ally in the region.
A Western diplomat said in an
interview that the veneer of democ-
acy was so thin in Honduras, and the
United States contribution so small
that "the Honduran army would be in
charging of the country would begin
to attack its problems. There is no indi-
cation that the United States Congress
would ever permit the White House that
latitude.
Corruption Is Prevalent
In addition, the diplomat said, in-
creased economic aid to Honduras is
likely to be swalloped up by a pervasive
anti-Sandinista corruption in the polit-
ical sector. He said the European Community
had discovered this when it tried to pro-
duce milk for Honduran children and
found that once it was in the hands of
Hondurans very little reached those
who needed it.
Several diplomats working in Central
America also said that when the United
States, part of the economic pressure
on Nicaragua, recently reduced Manda-
gel's sugar quota and gave the addi-
tional amount to Honduras, one or two
wealthy Honduran families promptly
cornered the market.
"The aid comes down and goes back
to Miami," a diplomat said.