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# WITHDRAWAL SHEET

## Ronald Reagan Library

**Collection Name** CULVAHOUSE, ARTHUR B.:FILES

**Withdrawer**

DLB 9/25/2014

**File Folder** [IRAN/ARMS TRANSACTION: DEAN MCGRATH'S FILES]: WILLIAMS & CONNOLLY DOCUMENTS REMOVED BY NORTH (3 OF 5)

**FOIA**

S643

**Box Number** CFOA 1132

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| ID     | Doc Type | Document Description   | No of Pages | Doc Date   | Restrictions |
|--------|----------|--|-------------|------------|--------------|
| 165788 | MEMO     | OLIVER NORTH TO JOHN POINDEXTER, RE; PRESS GUIDANCE RE COSTA RICAN AIRSTRIP                  | 2           | 9/30/1986  | B1           |
| 165789 | REPORT   | RE: NICARAGUA - P. 7-8, MAP, CHARTS, PHOTO   | 5           | 9/23/1986  | B1           |
| 165790 | REPORT   | DUPLICATE OF #164290; U.S/IRANIAN CONTACTS AND THE AMERICAN HOSTAGES (HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY) | 17          | 11/20/1986 | B1           |
| 165791 | NOTE     | RE: VISITORS   | 1           | ND         | B1           |
| 165792 | REPORT   | DCI'S IRAN TESTIMONY FOR HPSCI AND SSCI 21 NOVEMBER 1986                                     | 11          | 11/20/1986 | B1           |

The above documents were not referred for declassification review at time of processing

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September 30, 1986

PRESS GUIDANCE RE AIRSTRIP IN COSTA RICA

OK. j7

DID U.S. PERSONNEL SUPERVISE CONSTRUCTION OF THE AIRSTRIP IN NORTHERN COSTA RICA?

"The U.S. Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica, has reported that during the Administration of Former President Monge the Ministry of Public Security was offered the use of a site on the Santa Elena Peninsula which could be used as an extension of the civil guard training center at Murcielago. The site included a serviceable airstrip which could have supplemented the small one which is located near the training center. The offer was reportedly made by the owners of the property who had apparently decided to abandon plans for a tourism project. The Embassy has no information on the Ministry's decision concerning the offer. No U.S. Government funds were allocated or used in connection with this site nor were any U.S. Government personnel involved in its construction. Any further inquiries should be referred to the Government of Costa Rica."

WAS THE AIRSTRIP INTENDED FOR USE BY THE CONTRAS?

The Government of Costa Rica has made clear its position that it will not permit the use of its territory for military action against neighboring states. The U.S. Government respects that position.

070

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Green Acres Shopping Center • South Shore Mall  
NEW JERSEY—Morris Park Mall, Edison  
Bergen Mall, Rte 4, Paramus

# Americans Reportedly Supervised Airstrip Project Near Nicaragua

By JAMES LEMOYNE

Special to The New York Times

LIBERIA, Costa Rica, Sept. 28 — Two Americans and the local police commander supervised the building of a military-size airstrip near Costa Rica's border with Nicaragua, according to several local residents, including some who say they worked on the project.

The accounts of the origin and building of the air strip include details that directly contradict official Costa Rican Government explanations. The accounts indicate that the airstrip may be intended for use to supply Nicaraguan guerrillas or assist the American military.

Six Costa Rican residents of this northern border area with Nicaragua, three of whom said they helped build the mile-long airstrip, said in interviews that Americans oversaw the construction.

The strip is situated near an American-built base used to train Costa Rican border patrol units, and American military engineers and special forces have been active in the area in the last year. Nicaraguan guerrillas have bases nearby and have clashed with Nicaraguan Government forces on both sides of the border, although not in the last year.

### 'Americans Were There'

One town resident who befriended an American working on the airfield said the American identified himself as a former Green Beret demolitions expert who said he was working on "classified" matters.

"Americans were there and there was always a lot of mystery," said a local contractor, Leon Victor Arrieta, who says he was hired earlier this year to spend three months building the airstrip with the advice of the Americans and the protection of the local police commander. "I was told not to say I was building an airstrip. I was told to say I was building a road."

Mr. Arrieta said that he was ordered in April to finish work at the airfield quickly and that shortly after that workers in the area told him that a large military airplane had landed at the field. They said they did not know the nationality of the plane.

Several other local residents said the airfield's existence and use was an open secret in this extremely conservative and fiercely anti-Sandinista area.

"We all know it is a military airfield built by the Americans," one local businessman with close government ties said. "But we will claim it is only a tourist project because we wish the United States would invade Nicaragua and get rid of the Communists there."

### U.S. Refuses to Comment

The official spokesman for the United States Embassy in San José, Costa Rica, has refused to comment on the airfield in response to several telephone calls over the last five days.

[In Washington, a spokesman for the Defense Department declined to comment.]

The newly elected Costa Rican Government, which has tried to remain neutral in the conflict in Nicaragua, appears to have been embarrassed by publicity about the airstrip. Nicaragua is suing Costa Rica in the World Court for permitting its territory to be used by Nicaraguan guerrillas.

In its first public statement last week, the Costa Rican Government said it closed the airstrip earlier this month because it feared it was used by Nicaraguan anti-Government guerrillas and by drug traffickers. Public Security Minister Hernán Garrón added that the field was begun as a tourist project by a Panamanian-based company and then intended as an alternative airstrip for a nearby Costa Rican Government training base.

The airfield is six miles from an American-built base that is used to train Costa Rican border patrol units. But a mountain divides the strip from the base and there appears to be no connecting road. There is flat land near the base that would appear better suited for an airstrip to serve the training site.

### Near Deep Water Port

The Green Berets helped build and run the training base, situated near the village of Murcielago. Both the base and the airfield are within a few miles of the last natural deep water port before the Nicaraguan border.

While it is possible that the airfield is used by drug traffickers, it is far larger than the size normally needed by drug runners who usually fly light airplanes that do not require long landing strips.

The airfield is about 1.2 miles long, enough to handle all but the largest military aircraft. Costa Rican police reportedly found a newly built wooden barracks at the field, as well as a stock of aviation fuel.

The Americans who supervised the project gave their names only as "Robert" and "Mr. Bill," according to the two local contractors who built the field. The Americans often consulted with the local police commander and drove a jeep without license plates, one of the contractors said. Three other Americans visited the strip from time to time, the contractor added.

The two contractors, Gerardo Córdoba and Mr. Arrieta, said "Robert" and "Mr. Bill" planned and oversaw all details of the construction. Mr. Córdoba, who was the chief contractor, refused to say if the Americans or the local police commander, Col. José Ramón Montero, paid him for his work. Mr. Arrieta estimated the project cost \$80,000.

The American who gave his name as "Robert" said he was a former Green Beret demolitions and construction expert who had been in Vietnam, accord-



The New York Times/Sept. 28, 1986

Military-size airstrip is near Costa Rica-Nicaragua border.

ing to a close friend of his in this town who asked to remain unidentified.

"Robert" said he was working on the government training base nearby and also on "classified" projects that he could not discuss, the local resident said.

According to several other local residents the airfield was built from start to finish under the protection of the local police, known as the civil guard. Colonel Montero, who has since retired as police commander, was the one who first asked the two local builders to construct the airstrip in January, the contractors say.

Colonel Montero kept a 24-hour police guard at the airstrip and placed a locked gate on the road to the site to keep people out, one of the contractors said.

A reporter who tried to see Mr. Montero for the last three days was told by servants that he was not home. In an interview last week with a local newspaper Mr. Montero admitted being involved with the airfield but denied any Americans had been present. He said it was a tourist project.

The immigration official in charge of the Liberia airport, a Government-run installation, said he was surprised Mr. Montero would not see an American visitor.

"Col. Montero likes Americans and is very close to the American Embassy," said the immigration official, who asked that his name not be used.

According to the Costa Rican Public Security Minister, Mr. Garrón, the airfield was started last year as part of a tourist development. It was financed by an American company called Udall Research Corporation based in Panama, he said, denying any Costa Rican police involvement in the project.

When the tourist development failed, the airstrip was handed over to the Government under the administration that left office in May, Mr. Garrón said. But its legal ownership appears to remain in doubt since it appears to be on privately owned land.

Udall Research Corporation is not listed in Panama at the telephone numbers given on official government forms. Nor is the airstrip, the largest private field ever found in the country, according to Mr. Garrón, officially registered with the national civil aviation office.

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