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NEW YORK: 30 Fifth Ave., N.Y.C., N.Y. 10011 (212) 673-5470 / WASHINGTON, D.C.: 1900 L Street, N.W., Room 201, Wash., D.C. 20036 (202) 775-0216

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COHA CALLS FOR CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW OF AMBASSADOR NEGROPONTE

---NEGROPONTE GUIDES CONTRAS' OFFENSIVE

---U.S. ROLE IN COVERT OPERATIONS MAY VIOLATE BOLAND AMENDMENT

---RECENT ATTACKS IMPLY SHIFT IN ADMINISTRATION'S DESTABILIZATION PLANS

U.S. Ambassador to Honduras John D. Negroponte's extensive involvement in the military action of Honduras-based Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries --"contras"--seeking to topple the government of Nicaragua has violated the intent of congressional legislation prohibiting such activities, and warrants an immediate and complete congressional review of Negroponte's conduct, a spokesman for the Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA) said today.

"All evidence indicates that the Nicaraguan contras would not have initiated this offensive without a firm commitment of support from the U.S. government," a COHA spokesman stated. "If the charges made against Amb. Negroponte in recent U.S. press accounts are correct, the ambassador's involvement is not only profound but may be illegal, and represents the Reagan administration's bare-faced attempts to defy repeated congressional efforts to restrain the executive branch from committing such abuses of power."

A Nov. 8, 1982 Newsweek cover story revealed Negroponte's role as the coordinator of the covert actions against Nicaragua, using over 100 CIA personnel stationed in Honduras. An April 4, 1983 Time article described Negroponte as "the coordinator of the separate (military) command group activities" for the Fuerzas Democraticas Nicaraguenses (FDN).

Amb. Negroponte's actions, which are distinguished by their proconsular quality, stand in direct contradiction to the intent of the Boland amendment to the 1983 Defense Department appropriations bill passed unanimously by the House of Representatives last December. The amendment, introduced by Rep. Edward P. Boland (D-Mass.), the chairman of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, prohibits the use of U.S. funds for "military equipment, military training or advice, or other support for military activities, to any group or individual, not part of a country's armed forces, for the pur-

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.  
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pose of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua or provoking a military exchange between Nicaragua and Honduras."

According to the April 4, 1983 issue of Time magazine, the Reagan administration has sought to circumvent the intent of this legislation by using a complicated command structure for indirectly conveying orders for the contras' military campaign. In such capacity, U.S. military personnel from the Southern Command--Southcom--based in Panama, CIA experts, and Amb. Negroponte act as "advisers" to the political coordinating committee of the FDN, the most powerful contra group in Honduras, with forces estimated at between 2,000 and 4,000 troops. Along with the involvement of U.S. personnel in the operation's command, in which Amb. Negroponte serves as the overall "coordinator of the separate command group activities," are former top officials from Anastasio Somoza's national guard, including Col. Enrique Bermudez Varela, who serves as the FDN's military commander and is a member of its Political Directorate, and members of the Honduran military. At least one of 18 Argentine military advisers in Honduras as late as December remains in the coordinating command. The former Argentine advisers' posts were filled by Honduran army officers, led by Maj. Alexander Hernandez, a personal aide to Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, the Honduran Chief of Staff and a close friend of the U.S. ambassador.

According to a Western diplomat cited in the Time article, Negroponte's "job is to keep the Hondurans in the game." Still, another Western source cited in the Nov. 1982 Newsweek article was more circumspect in his evaluation of Negroponte's involvement in support of the exiles' efforts to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. "I'm not saying that the guy who gives all the orders here, even for (CIA) covert ops (operations), is Negroponte," the source maintained. "But that guy wears Negroponte's suits and eats his breakfast. Do you get the picture?"

According to administration sources, the \$19.9 million in CIA funding for the exiles' operations to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, which was first publicly revealed in press reports early last year, has since been decreased. As well, in response to strong congressional opposition to the CIA's covert operations plans, the sources indicated that the Reagan administration had modified its goal late last year to reflect a campaign of economic destabilization and harassment to be carried out by the exile forces.

The publication in two Honduran newspapers early last week of paid advertisements by the National Directorate of the FDN, setting forth a 13-point platform for a new Nicaraguan government and announcing that "our struggle is already underway in the mountains of Nicaragua," indicates that the Reagan administration has changed its mind again about the tactics employed in overthrowing the government of Nicaragua, and will rely even more heavily upon Amb. Negroponte as its point man in Honduras.

"This recent offensive underscores the necessity of placing stricter congressional controls over covert operations," a COHA spokesman said. "It is clear that, in light of the Boland amendment, the administration has not kept Congress informed of its covert operations activities. The repeated allegations of the U.S. ambassador's involvement in these activities must be investigated, and Amb. Negroponte must be brought before Congress to account for his participation in them."