

GRENADA

U.S. Military Intervention Criticized by Church Groups

By NC News Service

Several church leaders and groups have denounced the U.S. military intervention in Grenada.

The Caribbean Council of Churches, which has Catholic membership, deplored the invasion despite the "Caribbean presence among the invading forces."

"The Caribbean Council of Churches, reaffirming its principled stance against military intervention in the Caribbean by forces external to the region, strongly deplores...this morning's invasion of Grenada," the Caribbean statement said.

"The fact of Caribbean presence among the invading forces by no means alters that principle," the statement added.

The council includes the regional Catholic Church as a full member and Catholic Archbishop Kevin Felix of Castries, St. Lucia, is co-president of the CCC. Archbishop Felix, however, declined comment on the matter when contacted by NC News.

In seconding the Caribbean churches' protest, the British Council of Churches said it would support a U.N. "presence" in Grenada to return self-determination to the people.

Grenada is a former British colony and a member of the British Commonwealth.

The British council Oct. 27 called the invasion a "breach of the U.N. charter" and an "example of unprincipled great-power interference in the affairs of smaller nations."

"We shall continue to plead for a rapid return to the principles of international law, enabling the people of Grenada to determine their own future," the British group said.

"If any foreign presence would assist this process, action by the United Nations or the Commonwealth would have our full support," it said.

The British Commonwealth includes over 40 countries once part of the British empire.

"We are grateful for the CCC's responsible advocacy of peace and self-determination," the Catholic Institute for International Relations in London, said in an Oct. 27 statement.

"We pray for the CCC, its member churches and most of all, the people of Grenada," said the institute, an agency of the English and Welsh Catholic bishops.



A U.S. Marine guard on Grenada watches captured Cuban workers. (NC Photo)

In the United States, the American Friends Service Committee condemned the U.S. invasion as violating "the sovereignty of Grenada" and as having "no basis in fundamental U.S. principles and values."

Another critic was Methodist Bishop Federico Pagura of Argentina. In an Oct. 28 interview with NC News in New York he said the invasion was a "real affront" to Latin Americans.

"We feel more and more a great disappointment," the bishop, who heads the Methodist church in Argentina, said.

"Your president has the illusion he represents the hope of our continent and the world. But for us his actions are a sign of oppression and hypocrisy," he continued.

On Oct. 28, Bishop Pagura issued a statement on behalf of the Latin American Council of Churches denouncing the invasion. The Latin American church council includes

more than 100 churches and ecumenical organizations.

The statement called for "prompt withdrawal of the invading forces" and expressed hope that world reaction to the Grenadan events might serve to end "pending threats against the noble people of Nicaragua."

The statement also endorsed the denunciation issued by the Caribbean Council of Churches.

In Nicaragua a group of more than 200 U.S. citizens presented a statement to the U.S. embassy saying the Reagan administration "had violated the sovereignty of the tiny Caribbean country of Grenada to overthrow its de facto government."

The statement also expressed fear that the United States would use the same reasons of restoring democracy and rescuing U.S. citizens as an excuse to invade Nicaragua.

The statement issued by the group said more than half its members are church workers.

Nicaraguans Beat Bishop, Church Officials Say

Managua, Nicaragua (NC) -- Nicaraguan Catholic leaders scheduled a national day of protest Nov. 2 because of attacks on a bishop and eight churches by backers of the Sandinista government.

Protest plans were announced by Father Bismarck Carballo, spokesman for the Archdiocese of Managua, after members of a pro-government group beat up Auxiliary Bishop Bosco Vivas Robelo of Managua Oct. 30. Church officials also said that pro-government groups forced several Catholic churches to cancel Sunday Masses Oct. 30 because the parish priests opposed the country's new military conscription law.

In retaliation, the Nicaraguan bishops ordered Masses cancelled on Nov. 2, All Soul's Day.

Traditionally in Nicaragua on All Soul's Day, Catholics gather at churches and cemeteries for Masses and to honor the dead.

Bishop Vivas Robelo suffered a head cut when he was attacked outside a church in Managua, according to a lay worker in the Managua archdiocesan office.

The church worker, who requested anonymity, said the bishop was told that if he entered the church to attend Mass, "he could be considered a dead man."

The worker said members of the Sandinista group, called "Las Turbas," blocked entrances to several churches and beat up priests and parishioners causing Masses to be canceled.

"Las turbas" is Spanish for "the crowds that stir things up."

The conscription regulations, which require all men aged 18-22 to register for the military, had been criticized in August by the Nicaraguan Bishops' Conference. A conference statement said the regulations follow "the general lines of all

totalitarian-type legislation" and expressed fear that under the government plan "the army becomes converted into an obligatory center of political indoctrination in favor of the Sandinista party."

Nicaraguan Defense Minister Humberto Ortega on Oct. 17 criticized "the reactionary clergy" who oppose the law.

Support for the law, however, has come from several Catholic groups, including the Nicaraguan Conference of Religious and the Jesuit-run Central American Historical Institute. They have said the law is necessary to combat U.S.-financed guerrillas.

Death Squad Threatens 2 Salvadoran Bishops

San Salvador, El Salvador (NC) -- An anti-communist death squad has threatened to kill two Salvadoran bishops, accusing them of preaching pro-guerrilla propaganda.

The threats were issued Oct. 31 against Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas of San Salvador and Auxiliary Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez of San Salvador. Issuing the threats was the Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez Anti-Communist Brigade, which said it had evidence that the bishops were in contact with guerrillas.

The group said the bishops were using their Sunday homilies to conduct a pro-communist "campaign of misinformation."

The bishops have been strong critics of death squads and the U.S.-backed government's human rights record. They also have called for dialogue between the government and guerrillas to end the four-year civil war.

"Their Sunday homilies tend to divide the Salvadoran family, promoting false arguments that facilitate the campaign of misinformation which profits those who employ communist propaganda to pursue their aggression against this country," the group said in a communique.

"Bishops Rivera Damas and Rosa Chavez are hereby notified they must suspend their perturbing messages. Otherwise they will be drastically punished and will not be able to hide behind their vestments," it said.

Archbishop Rivera Damas' predecessor, Archbishop Oscar Romero, also a strong critic of death squads and human rights abuses, was assassinated in March 1980. No suspect has been arrested in the case and church officials say no serious investigation into the crime has been made by the government.

On Oct. 20 Bishop Rosa Chavez had said that some death squads have "more or less close" connections with the army. He said he "suspects that these squads are not controlled by the army" but rather are linked to some officers.

There is "sufficient evidence" that government security forces "sometimes send groups dressed as civilians to make certain captures," the bishop added.

Bishop Rosa Chavez expressed fear that the squads will succeed in silencing "progressive forces" in El Salvador.

Pope Names American LaPaz Auxiliary Bishop

Vatican City (NC) -- Pope John Paul II named a U.S. missionary, Father Louis Morgan Casey, as one of two auxiliary bishops for the Archdiocese of La Paz, Bolivia.

Father Casey is rector of the major seminary for the La Paz archdiocese. Also named auxiliary bishop was Carmelite Father Gonzalo del Castillo Crespo de Jesus Maria, vicar for Religious.

Father Casey was born in Portageville, Mo., and was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of St. Louis in 1962. In 1965 he became a missionary assigned to La Paz.

United Church Ministry Assails Grenada Action

In a sharply worded statement, the United Church Ministry, said the invasion of Grenada by U.S. forces "is to be condemned as strongly as possible."

The UCM, a group of black evangelical churches with strong ties to the diocesan Office of Black Ministry, issued the following statement:

"The United Church Ministry firmly stands in opposition to the recent invasion of Grenada by the United States and Caribbean military forces. This invasion which was unjustified, illegal

and immoral signifies the growing disdain that the United States government holds for struggling nations to determine their own destinies; particularly when those directions are not favorable to the United States and its political interests.

"President Reagan unofficially declared war on Grenada: a small lightly armed country that in no effective way could defend itself. The brutal risking of the lives of thousands of innocent civilians, notably children and women in order to satisfy a dishonorable mili-

tary lust is to be condemned as strongly as possible.

"None of the arguments of the Reagan administration can justify such a terrorist assault. At no time prior to the invasion has it been determined accurately that the American citizens on the island were in physical danger, and it has yet to be proved that the normal-sized runway under construction was intended for any other purpose beyond commercial flights.

"One thing is certain, and that is that the Reagan administration had been openly

hostile to the administration of Maurice Bishop for nearly three years, and based upon its own rhetoric clearly wished his decimation. For that reason we do not remove from the sphere of reality the possibility that the American government was involved in Mr. Bishop's assassination. That American precedent was clearly established in the Congo (Zaire) and in Chile. Thus, the counterfeit remorse now being shown toward Mr. Bishop's demise must be viewed as hypocritical and duplicitous.

"In addition, the other

Caribbean nations that took part in the assault are nothing more than weak, discreditable puppets of United States bidding, and we suspect were pressured to 'invite' American intervention as a means to solidify their economic patronage with this country.

"Finally, the United Church Ministry views this action of gunboat diplomacy as another feature of international racism and arrogance practiced by America towards countries controlled and populated in the main by people of color. There then is no morality of conscience

nor guilt in their aim to achieve utilitarian political ends.

"We condemn the action; we condemn the recklessness of the president of this country and his warlords, and we support the brave and courageous people of Grenada and their allies in their attempts to determine their own form of government.

"In doing this we would also encourage African American young people to refrain as best they can from military participation under the present administration."