

World & Nation

Pax Christi urges recall of troops from Honduras

Group 'deplores' Reagan's decision

Erie, PA (NC) — Pax Christi USA has urged President Reagan to recall U.S. military personnel and equipment which were sent to Honduras after Nicaraguan troops reportedly crossed into Honduras to pursue rebel forces.

In a March 17 statement sent to Reagan, Benedictine Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, national coordinator of Pax Christi USA, said the organization "deplores your unilateral decision to deploy" U.S. military in Honduras.

Pax Christi USA is the U.S. branch of an international Catholic peace organization and is based in Erie.

While Pax Christi "strongly objects" to Nicaraguan troops crossing into Honduras, the statement said, "we do not consider this temporary and brief intrusion into Honduras a justification for escalating U.S. involvement in the Nicaraguan civil war."

Reagan ordered that 3,200 U.S. combat troops be sent to Honduras March 16 as "a signal to the governments and people of Central America," said White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

Fitzwater said Reagan was responding to a request for assistance from Honduran President Jose Azcona. The action came after Reagan administration reports that Nicaraguan troops had invaded Honduras.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega said March 16 that Sandinista troops were "exchanging fire" with the Nicaraguan rebels at the Honduran border, but did not say the Sandinistas had entered Honduran territory.

Ortega also issued a nationwide alert against the possibility of direct U.S. military action against Nicaragua.



In a town near Managua, Nicaragua, pro-Sandinista demonstrators search the streets for members of opposition parties.

The Pax Christi statement urged Reagan to support the Central American peace plan proposed by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias and signed by five Central American presidents in 1987. Pax Christi further urged that Reagan "to resort to diplomacy in helping settle

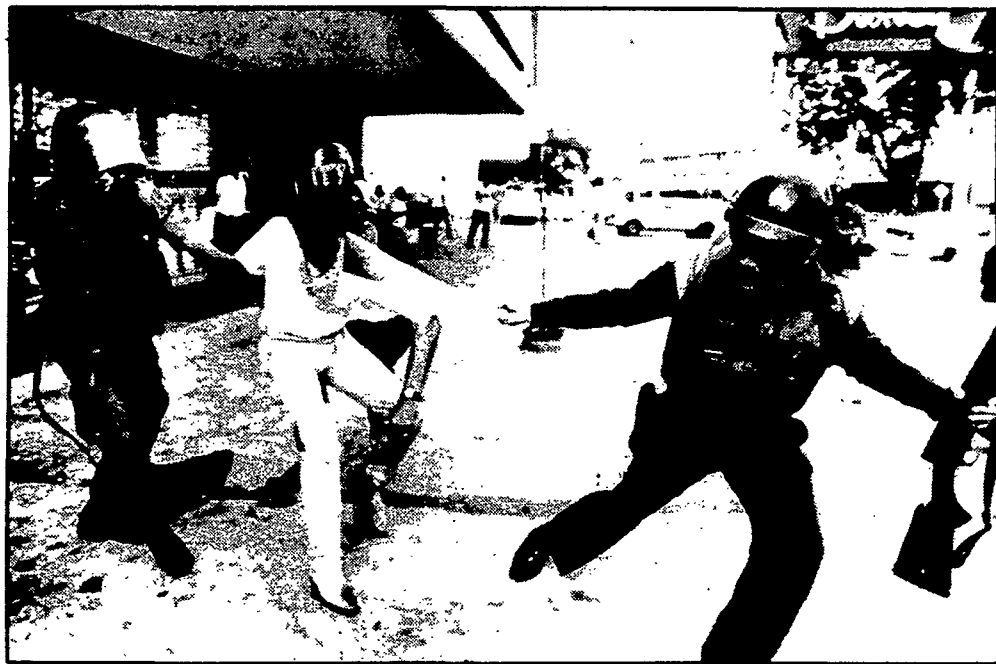
this regional conflict."

The statement also said Pax Christi "enthusiastically supports" Ortega's request to the United Nations and the Organization of American States to send a team of observers to monitor the Honduras-Nicaragua border.

Quoting from the U.S. bishops' 1987 statement on Central America, the Pax Christi statement said "only a political solution can finally be successful in Nicaragua as in Central America generally; there is no politically or morally acceptable military solution."

Amid maneuvering in Panama

Noriega supporters attack opposition protesters at church



Panamanian police arrest a protester in Panama city March 10, as demonstrations against Gen. Manuel A. Noriega, chief of the armed forces and de facto ruler of the nation, occurred throughout the city's business district.

Panama City, Panama (NC) — A gang of men in civilian clothes smashed cars and fired pistols into the air outside a Catholic church where prominent government opponents attended Mass March 13.

About a dozen men used metal pipes to smash windshields on four cars parked outside Christ the King Church in downtown Panama City.

The church has been a traditional bastion of opposition to Panama's defense minister, General Manuel Noriega. A leader of the opposition Popular Action Party, Mario Zuniga, and three members of the anti-government National Civic Crusade coalition are staging a hunger strike at the church as a protest against the government.

Members of the coalition were attending the 11 a.m. Mass at the church when the incident occurred.

When the attackers arrived just prior to the homily and began smashing the car windows, worshipers came out of the church and detained one of them. The others fled, but soon returned, firing .38-caliber pistols into the air. On their demand, the crowd released the detained attacker.

No one was reported wounded by the gunshots, nor was any damage done to the outside of the church.

Foreign journalists who had been notified of a press conference by the hunger strikers

were on the scene and were also attacked, with one photographer sustaining injuries after being hit by a pipe.

The Mass was suspended after the incident, and the priest who was celebrating the liturgy, Father Javier Villanueva, went to the apostolic nunciature to report the incident.

Archbishop Jose Sebastian Laboa, apostolic nuncio to Panama, reportedly filed a report to the Vatican that afternoon on the situation in Panama, where clergy have demanded a return to civilian authority over the armed forces.

The Panamanian congress recently impeached President Eric Arturo Delvalle for allegedly bowing to U.S. pressure to fire Noriega, who has been indicted in Miami on several drug-related charges.

The Associated Press and Reuters News Service reported early this week that Gen. Noriega had offered to step down before next year's presidential elections on the terms that opponents agree to negotiate with his regime. The United States reportedly rejected the general's offer.

Registration now underway at Greece Catholic school

Registration is being taken daily at St. Charles Borromeo School, 64 Maiden Lane, Greece, for new students — pre-school through eighth grade — for the September, 1988, school year.



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