



DISASTER CASE REPORT

Agency for
International
Development

Washington D.C.
20523

NICARAGUA - Civil Strife

Data

Date: August-September 1978 (FY 78)

Location: Most of the fighting took place in the cities of Managua, Esteli, Masaya, Matagalpa, Chinandega, and Leon, although fighting occurred in other areas around the country

No. Dead: An estimated 1,600 to 2,000 people; this figure does not include National Guard casualties; estimates on the number of wounded vary widely because most did not seek formal medical treatment

No. Affected: Approximately 150,000

Damage: An estimated \$66 million in damages included: destruction of 180 homes of low-income families; 171,000 sq. m. of construction damage to public and private buildings; destruction of 616 commercial establishments, 19 industries, and assorted economic operations; widespread looting and destruction of public records

The Disaster

Following the assassination in January 1978 of Pedro J. Chamorro, a leading journalist and opposition spokesman, a series of strikes, demonstrations, and public protests wracked Nicaragua. Increasingly violent confrontations and a growing tendency by the National Guard to use indiscriminate force, including summary execution to quell disturbances, climaxed in September with virtual occupation of five cities by guerilla elements of the Sandinista National Liberation Front. In at least two towns, Leon and Esteli, the rebels held the towns against National Guard counterattacks for several days. The Guard then resorted to artillery and aerial bombardment which destroyed major portions of both cities and killed or wounded considerable numbers of civilians. Both the National Guard and civilian mobs have been accused of looting and burning businesses in all five of the major cities affected by the fighting.

Thousands of non-combatants fled from the five towns and many smaller population centers were abandoned by their residents who feared that fighting would ultimately spread to their areas. Some 10,000 refugees crossed the northern border into Honduras and several thousand more entered Costa Rica in the south. Some of the refugees in both countries found shelter with Honduran and Costa Rican families or relatives, but the vast

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majority were placed in makeshift refugee camps. Within Nicaragua, almost 100,000 persons were displaced; many fled to outlying farms, others to smaller rural pueblos, and still others were living in the bush. Most fled without extra clothing, while hunger, exposure, and inadequate sanitation and water supply brought sickness, especially among children, and a need for medicine and medical attention.

Action Taken by the Government of Nicaragua (GON)

Since the Nicaraguan Government classified the fighting as a "disturbance" (asonada), rather than a civil insurrection or civil war, they offered little assistance to those affected by the fighting. Emergency feeding programs by the Government were limited to two cities and continued for less than one week after the cessation of hostilities. Instead, major feeding programs were carried out by the Nicaraguan Red Cross and by private and religious disaster relief organizations. During these programs, which continued in some cases up to 6 months after the fighting ended, 19,000 families (some 34,700 people) received food donations. Chronic unemployment stemming from political instability rendered 23,000 families in need of food relief. These individuals were also aided by private voluntary organizations.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On September 19, 1978 Ambassador Solaun determined that an emergency existed and a \$25,000 grant from the International Disaster Account was given to the Nicaraguan Red Cross for purchase and distribution of foodstuffs to refugees. However, because of the political nature of the disaster, the USG was not formally involved in any relief effort; assistance was rendered entirely through private and voluntary agencies.....\$25,000

A.I.D.'s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance contributed \$400,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which was used for feeding, emergency shelter, supplies, water, and medicine. A.I.D. also reimbursed Church World Services (CWS) \$2,000 for medical and food shipping costs, and donated four 700-gallon tank trailers for water transport, four 2.5 kW generators, two 15 kW generators, 150 stretchers, 50 cases of C-rations, and 250 folding beds, all to the ICRC for use by the Nicaraguan Red Cross.....\$417,380

Other USG aid included: diversion of P.L. 480 food supplies from Catholic Relief Services (CRS) stocks in Guatemala and a grant of \$13,960 to transport them to Nicaragua; a \$27,835 grant to the Seventh-day Adventist World Service (SAWS) for transport of supplies; and 200 doses of tetanus antibiotics were airlifted to Nicaragua at the request of the GON; and 500 tents at a cost of \$169,000 for displaced persons in Honduras which, due to the protracted nature of the disaster, was not granted until FY 79.....\$210,795

TOTAL \$653,175

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Assistance Provided by US Voluntary Agencies *

The American National Red Cross:

- arranged purchase of 50 tents for the Costa Rican Red Cross
- provided \$20,000 to the Honduran Red Cross and an additional \$5,000 to the Costa Rican Red Cross for Nicaraguan refugees.

CARE:

- diverted 32,850 pounds of P.L. 480 fortified rice from regular programs for use by refugees in Honduras
- provided locally purchased beans from their resources
- diverted one MT of non-fat dry milk to refugee relief in Costa Rica
- allocated \$12,500 for Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras

CRS:

- provided \$50,000 to Nicaragua, \$30,000 to Costa Rica, and \$5,000 to Honduras
- sent blankets worth \$5,000 to Costa Rica
- brought in food from P.L. 480 stocks held by Caritas in Guatemala--about 440,000 pounds (200,000 oats, 220,000 dried milk, 40,000 oil).

CWS:

- sent 1,500,000 water purification tablets, 50 tents, 100 bales of clothing, 5,000 blankets, and 1,000 feet of plastic sheeting; and procured 1,000 MT of beans, corn and rice, 100 tons of powdered milk, and 10,000 gallons of oil for use in Nicaragua; total value of \$360,000
- appealed for \$250,000

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee - donated food, clothing, blankets, and plastic sheeting for temporary shelter valued at \$30,000

Mennonite Central Committee - \$10,000 in cash to CEPAD

Save the Children Federation - undertook the feeding and general relief of some of the Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras

Seventh-day Adventist World Service - provided 15,000 lbs. beans, 8,000 lbs. rice, 2,500 lbs. milk, 2,500 lbs. cereals, 5,000 lbs. flour, 1,300 gallons oil, 100 tents, 750 bundles of

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clothes, 1,000 blankets, and assorted medicines all valued at \$129,266

TOTAL \$656,766

Assistance Provided by the International Community **

International Organizations

EEC - gave 500 tons of rice, 500 tons of flour, and 70 tons of powdered milk

ICRC - coordinated assistance and aided in the evacuation of the injured and the protection of the detainees; initially appealed for \$445,000 for relief activities for one month; subsequently appealed for \$1,479,000 to enable the Red Cross to provide assistance over a three month period; distributed food packages (\$280,000) and medical assistance (\$23,400) in Nicaragua; gave \$45,000 to Honduran Red Cross; established 96 refugee centers for 100,000 people; distributed 7,225 tons of food, 57 tons of medicaments, and 132 tons of personal comfort articles

Nestle Company - gave 25 tons of tinned goods

UNHCR - authorized \$150,000 for relief and \$430,000 for assistance to Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras

WFP - diverted in-country food to feeding refugees in Honduras

WHO - aided in setting up medical stations for Nicaraguan refugees in Costa Rica

Governments

Colombia - sent medical supplies to Costa Rica worth \$7,250

** Norway - gave \$373,563 in cash

Venezuela - provided a field hospital to Costa Rica

Voluntary Agencies

Austrian Red Cross - \$5,928 in cash

** Belgian Red Cross - \$6,293 in cash

Brot fur die Welt (FRG) - \$10,000 to Comite Evangelico por Ayuda al Desarrollo (CEPAD); pledge of \$20,000

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Canadian Red Cross - \$6,224 in cash

Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (UK) - \$1,500 to Costa Rica for Nicaraguan refugees

Christian Aid - pledge of \$10,000

** Colombian Red Cross - gave \$7,250 in kind

Costa Rican Red Cross - \$889 in cash

Danish Red Cross - \$5,243 in cash

** Federal Republic of Germany Red Cross - contributed \$994,885 for construction and repair of 8 departmental centers, and \$1,077,350 for purchase of 30 ambulances and their maintenance for one year.

Goodwill Caravanas (Costa Rica) - mobile medical teams

Honduran Red Cross - \$3,557 in cash

Mexican Red Cross - \$1,512 in cash

** The Netherlands Red Cross - gave \$10,732 in cash

** New Zealand Red Cross - \$1,005 in cash

Norwegian Red Cross - \$23,758 in cash, 5 eight-ton trucks, 8 ambulances, 5 Land Rovers, 5 Toyota pick-ups

Oxfam - \$9,748

** Spanish Red Cross - \$54,450 in cash

** Swedish Red Cross - \$6,104 in cash

Switzerland Red Cross - 350 tons flour, \$212,000 in cash and kind

United Kingdom Red Cross - \$3,651 in cash

World Council of Churches - \$25,000 to CEPAD

TOTAL \$3,761,292

* Please Note: the figures for total U.S. voluntary agency and international assistance are an approximation. In many cases, the cash value of in kind aid is unavailable.

** Figures represent total donations as of the 3rd quarter of 1979.