

BOWLES'S NEW AND ACCURATE MAP OF THE WORLD, OR TERRESTRIAL GLOBE, laid down from the BEST OBSERVATIONS and NEWEST DISCOVERIES; particularly those of the celebrated CIRCUMNAVIGATORS; Illustrated with a variety of useful PROJECTIONS and GEOGRAPHICAL DEFINITIONS, TABLES, and PROBLEMS: With an easy and familiar Explanation of the most curious and interesting Phenomena in the UNIVERSAL SYSTEM.

THE WORLD, OR TERRESTRIAL GLOBE, by made in the SOUTH SEAS, by ANSON, BYRON, WALLIS, BOUANSVILLE, COOK, and REPRESENTATIONS of the HEAVENLY BODIES: the most approved ASTRONOMICAL and of the most curious and interesting Phenomena in the UNIVERSAL SYSTEM.



Growing Military Relations between Nicaragua and Russia

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Open Source, Foreign Perspective, Underconsidered/Understudied Topics

The Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is an open source research organization of the U.S. Army. It was founded in 1986 as an innovative program that brought together military specialists and civilian academics to focus on military and security topics derived from unclassified, foreign media. Today FMSO maintains this research tradition of special insight and highly collaborative work by conducting unclassified research on foreign perspectives of defense and security issues that are understudied or unconsidered.

Author Background

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Previous Publication: This paper was originally published in Small Wars Journal on December 01, 2014. It is being posted on the Foreign Military Studies website with permission from the publisher.

FMSO has provided some editing, format, and graphics to this paper to conform to organizational standards. Academic conventions, source referencing, and citation style are those of the author.

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Since 2006 Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and the Sandinista Revolutionary Front have progressively increased bilateral relations with Russia in the realms of trade, commerce, agriculture, anti-drug programs, proposed space programs, and infrastructure development. Starting around 2008 Russia also began providing military support to Nicaragua through the provision of funds, equipment and training. In 2011 alone Russia provided Nicaragua with \$26.5 million in military aid—almost nine times more than the U.S. military gave.ⁱ In response to Russian support, the Nicaraguan Government, with approval from the National Assembly, will allow Russian military formations, ships, and aircraft to remain in the country through June 2015, despite the fact that its constitution prohibits the establishment of foreign military installations on national soil. And in an attempt to maintain continued presence in the country despite constitutional clauses, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has indicated that Russia would like to seek regular access to military facilities in Nicaragua in addition to establishing a military base. Russia is also taking similar actions in Venezuela and Cuba in what appears to be a geopolitical play for strategic military presence in Latin America.

Why Nicaragua?

According to Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, Nicaragua is geographically desirable, as it will allow Russian vessels access to refueling stations near the equator.ⁱⁱ Russia also wants to take part in providing military security during the construction of the Nicaragua Canal. What is interesting to note about the Canal project is that it doesn't have a declaration of neutrality which means that in the event of a conflict, the canal would not remain neutral. In addition, the canal concessions allow for the establishment of a military base. This is significant in the sense that granting Russia the security concession for the canal could actually serve as the cover for a Russian military base from which Russia could potentially host covert programs and

agents while simultaneously receiving economic benefits from illegal port activities. It also provides Russians with an operating base that has close proximity to the US. Natural resources including bauxite and potentially large deposits of natural gas in the Caribbean Sea also make Nicaragua appealing to Russia.

Nicaragua Supports Russian Military Presence and Space Programs

President Daniel Ortega has always maintained favorable relations with Russia, especially in the military realm. In 2014, for example, Nicaragua made an exception to its constitution that allowed Russian military formations, ships, and aircraft into the country as part of a six-month training agreement (which ended in June 2014). A second agreement which is in place until June 2015 allows Russian and Nicaraguan soldiers to conduct joint anti-narcotics patrols in territorial waters in the Caribbean and Pacific Ocean. This same agreement allows Russian fleets to provide security during the construction of the Nicaragua Canal.ⁱⁱⁱ When questioned regarding Russian military presence in Nicaragua, Ortega cited US military presence as a justification by stating “How many US military ships visited (our ports) between 2007 and 2012? How many US ships have spent months in our Caribbean and Pacific Ocean ports? Military vessels that have shown up on peacekeeping missions! And how many American soldiers and officers have landed in our country to deploy their bases?... (Foreign) bases are forbidden by the Constitution, but (in reality) bases have still been deployed.”^{iv}

Nicaragua is also supporting Russia’s space program, as President Daniel Ortega formally accepted a Russian proposal to build a satellite navigation monitoring system, known as GLONASS, in July 2014. According to Russian open source media, this system will “boost Russia’s GLONASS satellite navigation system, the only current alternative to the US’s Global Positioning System (GPS) to feature global coverage and comparable accuracy.”^v

Russian Military Support to Nicaragua:

According to President Ortega, Russia's contribution to the Nicaraguan military has been "steady, reliable and extremely important" and the facts bear this out.^{vi} Between 2008 and 2009 Russia provided the Nicaraguan Air Force with two modern helicopters, in addition to providing \$(USD) 10,000,000 in "non-reimbursable financial assistance." In March 2013 Russia helped to create an Anti-Drug Training Center in Managua. In April 2013 Russia provided the Nicaraguan Army with a fleet of Tiger armored vehicles, in addition to creating the Mariscal Gueorgui Zhúkov military training center. Support continued into 2014 with the donation of a flight and airborne simulator valued at \$(USD) 15 million.^{vii} When questioned about Russian support and equipment donations, President Ortega responded by stating, "Is (the United States) offering to equip our army with modern weapons? We all know that the arms we have are decades old already."^{viii}

The Perception of Neighboring Countries to Russian Presence in Nicaragua:

For Costa Rica, the idea of a Russian military base in Nicaragua is unnerving, as relations between the two countries are tense. Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solís reiterated this idea by referring to Nicaragua as an "uncomfortable neighbor" in March 2014. Solís further added that "We should keep in mind the ties that exist between our countries, but Nicaragua was an aggressor in Costa Rican territory; they invaded (referring to Isla Calero in 2010)."^{ix} Citing similar concerns, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Enrique Castillo indicated that Nicaragua is attempting to intimidate its Central American neighbors by arming itself with modern weapons and equipment with the help of Russia.

Conclusion:

Nicaragua appears to be an important first step for Russia in accomplishing its goal of obtaining strategic military presence in Latin America. And although no Russian military bases

have been approved for construction in Nicaragua, the idea has been proposed and the constitution has already been modified for initial Russian military presence on Nicaraguan soil. The Nicaragua Canal project which is slated to start in 2015 will also provide Russia with additional years of military presence in the country while simultaneously providing the opportunity to bring additional warships and land-based military equipment. This continued presence will likely allow Russia ample opportunities to further their end goal of establishing permanent military presence in Nicaragua while simultaneously establishing themselves as a strategic ally in the region.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ “Nicaragua Looks to Russia to Modernize Army. *Nicaragua Dispatch*. Accessed on September 09, 2014 from <http://nicaraguadispatch.com/2014/04/nicaragua-looks-to-russia-to-modernize-army/>

ⁱⁱ “Russia Seeks Access to Bases in Eight Countries for Its Ships and Bombers.” *CNSN News*. Accessed on August 05, 2014 from <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/russia-seeks-access-bases-eight-countries-its-ships-and-bombers>

ⁱⁱⁱ “Base militar de Rusia en Nicaragua.” *La Prensa*. Accessed on August 28, 2014 from <http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2014/07/30/voces/205395-base-militar-rusia-nicaragua>

^{iv} “Ortega: Rusia armará al Ejército.” *La Prensa*. Accessed on August 5, 2014 from <http://noticias.laprensa.com.ni/2014/04/06/ultima-hora/189866-ortega-rusia-armara-al-ejercito>

^v “Glonass funcionará en dos años en Nicaragua.” *El Nuevo Diario*. Accessed on July 28, 2014 from <http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/politica/325066-glonass-funcionara-anos-nicaragua>

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^{viii} “Ortega: Rusia armará al Ejército.” *La Prensa*. Accessed on August 5, 2014 from <http://noticias.laprensa.com.ni/2014/04/06/ultima-hora/189866-ortega-rusia-armara-al-ejercito>

^{ix} “Armamento de Nicaragua inquieta al canciller. *La Nación*.” Accessed on September 05, 2014 from http://www.nacion.com/nacional/politica/Armamento-Nicaragua-inquieta-canciller_0_1437256311.html