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Nicaragua: U.S. Citizen Sam Hall Arrested Dec. 12 On Suspicion Of Espionage

by Deborah Tyroler

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Late on Dec. 13, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto announced that US citizen Samuel Nesley Hall, 49, of Dayton, Ohio, had been arrested Dec. 12 in a restricted area of the Punta Huerte airbase, 45 km. north of Managua. Detained on suspicion of espionage, Hall was reportedly carrying sketches of military facilities at the port of Corinto and Tipitapa. The minister said Hall's passport identified him as Samuel Nesley Halley. The passport, said d'Escoto, had entrance visa stamps from Israel, South Africa and El Salvador, "among other countries." Hall first told Nicaraguan authorities he was a writer "who came to see what was happening in the country," said d'Escoto. After further questioning, the foreign minister stated Hall admitted he was working for a private US espionage company called "Phoenix Battalion." Although private, the prisoner said the company was "collecting information for the U.S. government." Hall is being held at the Tipitapas penitentiary, 20 km. east of the capital. D'Escoto also indicated Hall might be forced to stand trial before the Sandinista People's Tribunal that tried US citizen Eugene Hasenfus and sentenced him to 30 years in jail for violating terrorism and public security laws. "If someone is gathering intelligence information, he cannot be walking around with good intentions," d'Escoto said. "(Hall) will be investigated in depth and possibly stand before the tribunals." Dec. 14: The US Embassy requested that the Nicaraguan government permit the US consul to speak with Hall. Sandinista authorities said such visit was being delayed until the "proper" time. An embassy spokesperson said while US officials were informed of the detention, they had "no independent information" on Hall. In the early 1970s Hall worked in Egypt and Jordan for the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, and in the late 1970s for the South African government. Dec. 15: As reported by UPI, after the announcement of Hall's arrest, "reports surfaced that he was the brother of Rep. Tony Hall (D-Ohio)." UPI also revealed that in March 1985, Hall sent letters to friends seeking help for the Miskito Indians. The letter was signed "Major Sam Hall, guerrilla commander, Miskito Indians of Central America." In a November interview with WPLP radio in St. Petersburg, Fla., Hall commented on President Reagan's involvement in the Iran-contra arms affair. "The unfortunate thing is he got caught," Hall said. "The people out there with their heads in the sand have to realize these things go on all the time." In Decatur, Ala., Thomas V. Posey, director of the three-year-old Civilian Materiel Assistance, described Hall as a "Rambo" type who worked alone in a jealous attempt to become famous. Hall was formerly linked to the CMA, which was formed to aid the contras with non-military supplies. Posey said Hall was the self-proclaimed leader of Phoenix Battalion, an effort Hall proposed 18 months ago to the CIA and the Pentagon as a paramilitary group to help the contras. The CMA leader said he believed Hall was the only member of the Battalion. White House spokesman Larry Speakes and State Department spokesman Charles Redman said there was no evidence that Hall was employed by the US government. BARRICADA quoted Nicaraguan Interior Minister Tomas Borge as saying Hall had several maps of military interest hidden in his socks. A UPI update reports that according to Posey and newspaper accounts, Hall has attempted to obtain fame as a freelance counterterrorist commando in South Africa, Lebanon and Israel. He was also described as "fun-loving" during his one term as state legislator, and a former drug addict who once shot himself in

leg and was hospitalized for mental problems. CBS News reported that congressional investigators familiar with Hall say he is linked to an illegal military supply network for the contras. He has reportedly worked with mercenaries, illegally operating under former National Security Council member Lt. Col. Oliver North, and funded by the NSC. Dec. 16: The Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry announced that the US consul in Managua will soon be permitted to see Hall. According to a report by Cuban news agency PRENSA LATINA, Hall was part of a CIA-directed plot to assassinate the US Ambassador to Costa Rica, Lewis Tambs. The reported objective of the plan was to blame the Sandinistas, and thus create a pretext for US military invasion of Nicaragua. The source of this story was an interview with Cuban exile Jesus Garcia, published Dec. 15 in the United States. Garcia is presently incarcerated in Miami for illegal arms possession. According to Garcia, in January 1985 the CIA attempted to recruit Hall for the assassination in Miami. The Cuban-American also stated that Hall was associated with Steven Carr, another soldier of fortune. Early last year, Carr was serving a one-year sentence in Costa Rica on drug trafficking charges. Carr, who had contacted a Senate investigator about the contra financing network, was reported to have died of a drug overdose in California on Dec. 15. (Basic data from several reports by UPI, Associated Press, Reuters, Prensa Latina)

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