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## NICARAGUA REBELS ACCUSED OF ABUSES

### Private Group Reports Pattern of Attacks and Atrocities

By **LARRY ROHTER**  
Special to The New York Times

ESTELI, Nicaragua, March 5 — A new report by a private group asserts that over the last three years, rebels from one of the organizations seeking to overthrow the Nicaraguan Government have engaged in a pattern of attacks and atrocities against civilian targets.

A preliminary draft copy, made available here, gives details of 28 incidents that it says "have resulted in assassination, torture, rape, kidnapping and mutilation of civilians."

Four of the 28 incidents were chosen at random and witnesses were independently interviewed by The New York Times. These interviews seemed to verify some of the details in the report.

The new report, prepared by a three-member team headed by Reed Brody, a former New York State Assistant Attorney General, is based on interviews conducted in Nicaragua between September 1984 and January 1985. It is to be officially released in Washington on Thursday.

The findings are similar to those in a report issued today in Washington by Americas Watch, a private, non-politi-

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Reed Brody  
**Digna Barreda de Ubeda** outside her new home in Esteli, Nicaragua. Mrs. Barreda said her former home was burned after she told of being abducted and tortured by anti-Government guerrillas.

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# Nicaragua Insurgents Accused of Atrocities

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cal organization that monitors human rights in the Western Hemisphere. At the same time, the Americas Watch study cited human rights abuses by the other side, noting that there had been violations by the Nicaraguan Army. But it said that there had been a "sharp decline" in such abuses by the Government since 1982.

The reports are being released in advance of what is expected to be a heated debate in Congress over United States financing for the anti-Sandinista rebels prior to a vote later this month. President Reagan has asked Congress to renew \$14 million in financing to the insurgents, whom he has described as "freedom fighters" who are the "moral equal of our Founding Fathers."

## One Rebel Group Cited

The allegations of killing, rape and kidnapping described in the Brody report seem to apply only to the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, which is based in Honduras and is most active in the northern part of Nicaragua. No charges of atrocities were made by witnesses against the other main anti-Sandinista military force, the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance, which is dominated by disgruntled former officials of the Sandinista Government.

With the help of the Washington law firm of Reichler and Appelbaum, which is representing Nicaragua in its lawsuit against the United States in the International Court of Justice, Mr. Brody's group was able to obtain official cooperation in arranging interviews with victims of rebel violence.

The follow-up interviews of the witnesses were conducted by The Times in Spanish, in the presence of relatives. No Nicaraguan police, army or other Government officials were present, and none of the interviews were arranged through official channels.

## Law Firm Proposed Study

Although Mr. Brody says he disagrees with Reagan Administration policies in Nicaragua, he says he undertook the project out of personal, not political, interest. At the same time, he acknowledges that the release of his report during the debate over renewed aid to the rebels "is not unintentional."

Reichler and Appelbaum, the law firm, originally proposed an independent study and arranged for Mr. Brody's participation.

One of the witnesses, who was quoted in the report and later was questioned by The Times, described an early morning attack that he said came as he was on his way to pick coffee at a cooperative farm north of here.

Along with about 30 other volunteers, the witness, Santos Roger Briones, 16 years old, said he was traveling in a Government-owned truck early last December. Nearly a kilometer ahead was a pickup truck carrying armed soldiers who had been supposed to protect the unarmed civilians from rebel attack.

Suddenly, Mr. Briones recalled, the dump truck was peppered with rifle, machine-gun, grenade and rocket fire. Many in the truck were wounded. Those who could jumped down and ran for their lives.

## Played Dead

"I was hit in the foot and was covered with blood, so I lay on the ground, pretending to be dead," said Mr. Briones. He said he remained motionless as men in blue uniforms robbed him of his boots and wallet. "Then the contras came and cut the throats of the people who stayed on the truck," he said, using a Spanish term for the rebels.

"When they were finished, they set the truck on fire," he added. "From where I was lying, I could hear the groans and the screams of those who were being burned alive."

All told, 21 civilians ranging in age from five to 60 were killed, 8 wounded and one kidnapped in that incident, which is discussed in the Brody report.

Both the interviews with The Times and the report itself indicate that the distinction between combatants and noncombatants is not always clear in Nicaragua. Civilian vehicles sometimes offer rides to hitchhiking soldiers in uniform, and farmers, workers and students in civilian dress often carry arms for what they say is self-defense.

## Recurring Patterns Cited

Unarmed victims of the guerrilla attacks said in each case that they shouted that they were civilians as soon as the firing started. In some instances the shooting stopped, they said, but in other cases it continued.

The witnesses interviewed by The Times described several patterns that they said enabled them to identify their attackers as rebels. There were constant references, for example, to blue uniforms with shoulder patches reading "F.D.N.," the Spanish initials for the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, as well as repeated mentions of Chinese-made AK-47 machine guns and a type of Belgian-made rifle that the Nicaraguan Democratic Force uses.

Witnesses also spoke of tents, knapsacks, and boots with "U.S.A." printed on them, which they took as proof that their captors were rebel forces and not Sandinista troops trying to pass themselves off as insurgents. Another characteristic, the witnesses said, was the constant use of a word meaning 'rabid dog' that the Nicaraguan Democratic Force uses to refer to Sandinistas and their supporters.

## An Abduction Described

Each of these patterns was mentioned by Digna Barreda de Ubeda, 29, who told of an ordeal at the hands of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force that began in May 1983 with a visit to her uncle in Sapote, north of here. She and her husband were abducted at gunpoint by men claiming to be officials of the Ministry of the Interior investigating counterrevolutionary activities.

Once outside of the town, however, the men identified themselves as members of the Nicaraguan Democratic

Force and began to beat her 50-year-old husband, she said. The couple was marched to an encampment commanded, Mrs. Barreda says, by men called "Poison" and "The Vulture."

Mrs. Barreda said she made no effort to hide her pro-Sandinista sympathies. She is a member of a Christian peasant self-help group that works closely with Sandinista groups and also belongs to the official Nicaraguan Women's Association; her husband fought with the Sandinistas during the insurrection in 1979 that ousted Gen. Anastasio Somoza Debayle.

"There were 50 or 60 of them in the group, and over five days they took turns raping me until each had had his chance," said Mrs. Barreda.

While she was being raped, said Mrs. Barreda, other soldiers standing by stabbed her with bayonets in the legs and side. During some episodes, she says, her husband was forced to watch.

Mrs. Barreda said that during her five days as a captive she witnessed the torture and murder of a peasant acquaintance who had been kidnapped by the Nicaraguan Democratic Force in a separate incident.

"They asked him if he loved the revolution," she recalled. "He said, 'Yes, I love the revolution, because it has given me land, which is more than Somoza ever did.'"

"So they started to gouge out his eyes with a spoon," she said. "Then they bayoneted him through the neck. They finished him off with a burst of machine gun fire," she said.

Mrs. Barreda said the soldier who was told to set her free raped her again. She said her husband was released shortly afterward.

## U.S. Groups Conduct Interviews

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 6 — Attorneys sent to Nicaragua by the International Human Rights Law Group, the Washington Office on Latin America and the office of Representative Sam Gejdenson, Democrat of Connecticut, say they have conducted their own interviews with victims cited in Mr. Brody's report.

In a statement to be issued on Thursday, the attorneys said they had interviewed more than 30 people, adding, "Although we were not able to investigate all of the affidavits on which Mr. Brody's report is based, most that we did investigate appear accurate in all material respects."

Mr. Gejdenson, who said he has voted against covert aid to the Nicaraguan rebels "from the beginning," said the report convinces him that "the Administration wants to finance civilian atrocities with American taxpayers' dollars."

Mr. Gejdenson is a member of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. A staff member said the subcommittee will hold a hearing on the issue of rebel atrocities soon.