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file PLO

By Kingsbury Smith
National Editor, The Hearst Newspapers

WASHINGTON--It may come as a surprise to those who think President Reagan is exaggerating the importance of Soviet-Cuban bloc intervention in Central America to learn that the Palestine Arab terrorist organization, PLO, is playing an active, on-the-scene role in the Havana-hatched plot to establish communist control of the region through whose waters pass 70 percent of America's foreign oil supplies.

The Palestine Liberation Organization is supporting with funds and guerrilla training camps anti-American revolutionary regimes and movements in Central America as well as elsewhere in Latin America.

According to American intelligence reports, Nicaragua is the center for Palestine Liberation Organization operations in Central America and Panama. These operations are not simply for the purpose of promoting support for establishment of a radical independent Palestine Arab state on Israel's border. They are primarily devoted to training Marxist-oriented military forces.

A current report by the Washington-based Heritage Foundation, which has close contacts with high administration officials, states that the PLO runs 3 of 10 camps on Nicaragua's northwest coast for the training of revolutionaries from El Salvador and elsewhere.

At camps in Cuba and the Middle East, the PLO trains cadres of terrorists, which head back to Latin America to undermine established regimes," the report adds. "While the PLO is not the cause of Latin America's most basic problems, it is exploiting them. In turn, the PLO increasingly uses its growing Latin American base to reinforce its international terrorist campaign against the United States and Israel."

The PLO's aim in Central America, according to the Heritage report, is to bring about the creation of an anti-U.S. communist bloc in Central America composed of Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. Its immediate target is El Salvador, whose leader, Shafik Handal, is the son of Palestine emigres from the Gaza strip. The State Department informed Congress sometime ago that there had been "a massive influx of arms from Soviet and other communist sources into El Salvador."

Some of the money which the PLO is known to have loaned revolutionary movements in Central America, including at least \$12 million to the Nicaraguan Sandinista dictatorship, may have come from the United Nations, and thus indirectly from the American taxpayer.

Although U.S. law prohibits American financial aid to the PLO, the latter receives funds from such agencies as UNESCO which extends aid to "Refugees and Liberation Movements." The 1981-83 UNESCO budget for such aid totalled more than \$8 million.

The State Department withholds funds from UN projects that directly aid the PLO, but Richard Hennes, executive director of the International Organizations Bureau, was quoted by American Heritage as saying the amount withheld had been "largely symbolic." Since the U.S. is a major financial supporter of the UN, its financial aid indirectly helps such bodies as the UN Committee for the Inalienable Rights of the Palestine People and the UN Special Unit for Palestine Rights.

Thus, PLO revolutionary activities in Central America undoubtedly benefit from UN support, and indirectly from America's financial contribution to the world organization.

The PLO made its debut in Latin America in 1966 under the auspices of Fidel Castro when its representatives attended a "solidarity" conference in Cuba of Asian, African and Latin American radicals. In 1969, Moscow started publicly supporting the PLO after Yasir Arafat became its leader. A May 1972 meeting in Algiers between Castro and PLO leaders cemented the PLO-Cuban axis and led to joint training of Latin American guerrillas with specialized instruction in Lebanon, South Yemen and Libya.

Following President Anwar Sadat's expulsion of the Russians from Egypt in July, 1972, Moscow made its first direct arms shipments to the PLO. Once firmly allied with Cuba and the Soviet Union, the PLO established links with radicals of every kind in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Panama, Argentina, Chile and elsewhere in Latin America.

While Arafat was pretending to be a moderate, while President Reagan was being urged to initiate direct talks with the PLO, and while Soviet-Cuban intervention in Central America was being discounted by Mexican and other Latin American leaders, as well as by some leading media commentators in this country, the PLO was and still is engaged in trying to turn Central America into an anti-American bastion of communism.

It is being helped to do so by America's so-called friend in the Arab world, Saudi Arabia, whose feudal regime is estimated to have given the PLO more than \$200 million.

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