

U.S. Gives Police Anti-Drug Aid Package

By Sam Jacoby

Nica Times Staff

U.S. Ambassador Paul Trivelli traveled to the southern border crossing of Peñas Blancas earlier this month to oversee the transfer of a \$160,000 anti-narcotics aid package to the National Police, as a sign of the United States' continually increasing confidence in Nicaraguan security and defense institutions.

The bulk of the aid went towards offsetting the expense of an already constructed vehicle-inspection center, though the package also included a \$15,000 fiber-optic scope used to search for hidden compartments in vehicles.

A dirt bike, the first of seven, was also part of the donation, which was given under the auspices of the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law-Enforcement Affairs (INL).

The United States has additionally promised to provide the Peñas Blancas facility later this year with an all-terrain vehicle and \$23,000 in security equipment to help stem the tide of narcotics and trafficked money across Nicaragua's borders.

So far, it has been a successful year for Nicaragua's anti-drug trafficking efforts.

Trivelli, in a local radio interview earlier this month, lauded the efforts of Nicaraguan law enforcement.

"Since last October, security authorities have seized some 19.9 metric tons of cocaine," he said, noting that the amount far



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy

exceeds the hauls of previous years.

Such tangible headway in the U.S.-led war on drugs may translate into more substantial rewards for the Nicaraguan police and military, which are already scheduled to receive more than \$10 million in anti-trafficking assistance in a 2006-2007 aid package, Trivelli said.

The Delivery:
U.S. Ambassador Paul Trivelli donates anti-drug trafficking equipment to police at the Peñas Blancas border crossing.

There may be larger gifts to come.

Nicaragua's Armed Forces chief, General Omar Halleslevens, earlier this month made a public appeal for international aid to purchase several new airplanes to help the country intercept drug traffickers (NT, July 13). Those requests, although not yet made through formal diplomatic channels, may

have already reached receptive ears in Washington, D.C.

Trivelli emphasized that the U.S. Department of Defense is aware of the needs of the Nicaraguan military, and that the State Department would follow-up on the matter. The ambassador added that the United States' "relationship with the military, I believe, is very, very positive."

Gen. Halleslevens has made other efforts to strengthen institutional military relations with the United States, including a visit to the Pentagon last month to strengthen ties with the U.S. brass (NT, June 15).

The positive relationship between the U.S. and Nicaraguan militaries is still a new and developing trend.

Formal military relations between the two countries began to strengthen in 2003, when Nicaragua sent a small contingent to join the U.S.-led attack on Iraq. The 115 Nicaraguan soldiers were withdrawn soon after, in February 2004, due to financial constraints.

Then, in March 2005, the United States temporarily suspended \$2.3 million in military aid to Nicaragua pending the government's agreement to destroy all remaining Soviet-era surface-to-air missiles, known as SAM-7s (NT, April 1, 2005).

The Nicaraguan military has since agreed to destroy most of its stockpiled SAM-7s, but insists it will maintain enough in its arsenal for national defense purposes – an issue that could potentially be a future sticking point with the United States. ■

CALENDAR

*First time in Calendar. Listings are in chronological order. E-mail Calendar submissions to esabo@ticotimes.net by 11 a.m. Monday, five days prior to date of publication.

Managua

***Art Opening:** Painting and handicrafts from Solentiname Island, exhibit called "We the United Artists, Save Nature," Cultural Center of Managua, next to National Palace, July 20-27, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

***Movie:** The film, "Castapacio," by Spanish artist Lourdes Castro, July 20, 7 p.m., Nicaragua Institute for Hispanic Culture, Las Colinas, Km. 8.1 Carretera Masaya, 276-0884.

***Theater:** One-man show, Justo Rufino Garay Theater, next to Parque las Palmas,

July 20-21, 7:30 p.m.

***Movie:** The documentary "La isla de los niños perdidos," the story of 10 young people sentenced to 30 years in a Nicaragua jail, July 23, 7 p.m., Nicaragua Institute for Hispanic Culture.

Granada

***Casino Night Fundraiser:** Eurocafe, next to Central Park, is holding its Casino Night Fundraiser for group Empowerment International, 200-córdoba entrance, silent auction, games, prizes, July 21, 6:30 p.m.

Charity Biker Tour: Sign up now for the "First Annual Jimmy Three Fingers Wanted Dead or Alive Charity Motorcycle Tour," July 28, Calle Consulado, 552-8115.

Kids' Camp: Entertain your kids at Camp Granada, a 2-week program of volunteering, crafts and play activity. Weekday mornings, for approximately five hours. For more information, contact: Sharon Danley at 814-4791, sldanley@yahoo.com, or Tavid Dobson, 809-6955, tavid@hotmail.co.uk.

Movie: Outdoor showing of "Light bucket," July 24, 6 p.m. Casa de los Tres Mundos.

Live Music: Saturdays, 7:30 p.m. Hotel Casa San Francisco, next to Convento, 552-8235.

Leon

Night of Romance: Friday nights at vegetarian restaurant CociArte, live acoustic music and candlelight dinner, 6 p.m., north of Iglesia El Laboratorio: Also, CociArte has 'Jazzy Chess Sundays,' live jazz and organic coffee with open chess matches.

Know a good plumber? Or a good handyman, gardener or electrician?

As a service to the community, The Nica Times is putting together a Service Directory of qualified and responsible people in the service industry. This will be a list of NT-reader recommended individuals who are particularly good at what they do, whether it be ironing clothes, repairing a TV, or fixing a roof. If you know people in your community with a special knack for what they do, please e-mail their name, service provided, contact information and whether or not they speak English to trogers@ticotimes.net, with "service directory" in the subject line.

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The Ogre Returns: Shrek and friends, including a donkey that sounds just like Eddy Murphy, hit Managua theaters this week.

Managua Theaters

- *Alhambra Bello Horizonte: 244-1889.
- *Cinemark Metrocentro: 271-9037.
- *Cinemas Galería: 276-5065.
- *Cinemas Plaza Inter: 222-3828.

(Call Theaters for Schedule & Show Times.)

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