

Contra policy an 'atrocities'

By Paul Ertelt

Of the Emerald

The U.S. policy of backing contra rebels in Nicaragua is not only an atrocity, it is an atrocity that is not working, a former CIA analyst said Tuesday.

"The U.S. has failed to achieve any of its spoken or unspoken objectives," said David MacMichael, a former CIA analyst who spoke in Geology 150.

MacMichael made national news last June when he made public his conclusion that intelligence data gathered by the CIA failed to uphold Pres. Ronald Reagan's charge that the Nicaraguan government is supplying a steady flow of arms to Salvadoran guerillas.

The Reagan administration has used the alleged shipment of arms as justification for financing the contra rebels fighting the Sandinista government of Nicaragua.

MacMichael's lecture was not only the last stop on a Northwest speaking tour, but a return to his alma mater. Twenty-five years ago he began his graduate work at the University and received a master's and a doctorate degree from the history department.

Between 1981 and 1983, MacMichael worked as a contract analyst for the CIA and had access to "top secret" and higher classified documents. But he said he found no substantive evidence of arms shipments from Nicaragua to El Salvador later than early 1981.

The Sandinistas admit sending arms to El Salvador between late 1980 and early 1981, but any arms that have come from Nicaragua since then probably came from Salvadoran refugees in that country, he said.

MacMichael disagreed with the official interpretation of the situation while still with the CIA, and he believes this is why his contract was not renewed. In June, he revealed his doubts to the New York Times.

Because he had signed a secrecy agreement, MacMichael's lecture had to be approved by the CIA, and he did not reveal any classified information. But he did attack the quantity and quality of evidence the administration has produced to back its claims.

He was especially critical of a State Department "green paper" which Pres. Reagan purported was definitive proof of the arms shipments.

"It is such a bad piece of work that if you were to submit this as a term paper... your further tenure here would be in doubt," he said.

MacMichael questioned why neither the contras nor the Honduran army has been able to intercept any overland arms shipments, and why combined U.S., Salvadoran and Honduran naval forces have not intercepted shipments in the Gulf of Fonseca, which separates Nicaragua from El Salvador.

He also wondered why there was not more evidence of shipments by air.

"Not one aircraft has yet crashed; not one has yet dropped its load in the wrong place; we have not yet found one crate hung up in a tree. This is quite extraordinary in the annals of aerial history."

But MacMichael said the situation was summed up recently by Thomas Pickering,

ambassador to El Salvador: "We don't have any silver bullet or any smoking gun."

The real goal of the contras is not to intercept weapons, but to overthrow the Sandinista government, he said. However, the contras admit they are not able to do this without direct U.S. military involvement.

A U.S. invasion of Nicaragua is unlikely, but it is a possibility, MacMichael said. According to one researcher, the level of involvement needed to successfully subdue Nicaragua would cost the United States 20,000 casualties, including 5,000-8,000 dead.

"This is not exactly what I would call a picnic in the park," he said.

MacMichael urged the audience to call their Congressional representatives, especially Sen. Bob Packwood, and op-

pose any further aid to the contras.

"In the last three years of contra war over 3,000 Nicaraguans have been killed," MacMichael said. "The vast majority were civilians and a good proportion were women and children."



David MacMichael

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