

Everything Old is New Again: Russia Returns to Nicaragua

fpri.org/article/2016/07/everything-old-new-russia-returns-nicaragua/

July 22, 2016

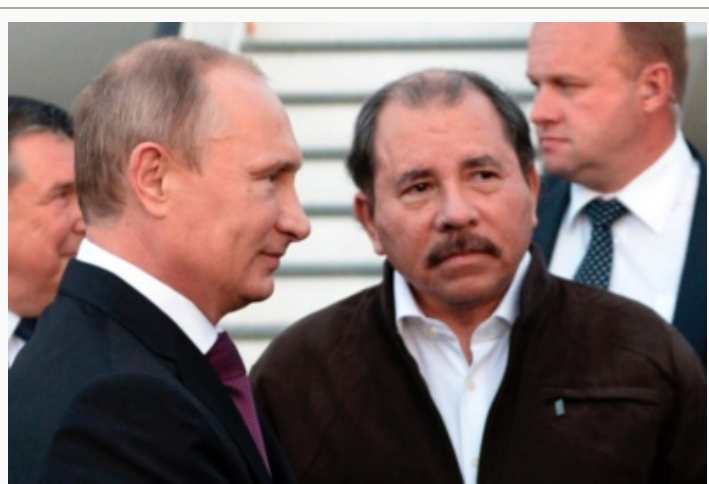
E-Notes

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*Don't throw the past away
You might need it some rainy day
Dreams can come true again
When everything old is new again*
-Peter Allen



President Vladimir Putin meets President Daniel Ortega in Managua (Source: RIA-Novosti)

Two Western media outlets reported on 23 June that Russia was engaged in building a signals intelligence^[1] (SIGINT) base in Nicaragua as “part of a recent deal between Moscow and Managua involving the sale of 50 T-72 Russian tanks.”^[2] The reports came shortly after the 14 June expulsion of some United States Homeland Defense personnel by the Nicaraguan government. The United States State Department claimed Nicaragua expelled three officials with diplomatic passports. The Nicaraguan government claimed it expelled two Homeland Defense officials who were in the country performing work related to counterterrorism without first notifying Nicaraguan authorities.^[3]

One published report stated that the third American was “performing what could be construed as espionage-related activities on the construction of the Grand Inter-oceanic Canal.”^[4] The reference is to the Nicaraguan trans-isthmus shipping channel under construction by the Chinese infrastructure firm, HK Nicaragua Canal Development Investment Group. The report identified the person in question as “Evan Ellis,” an “expert in China-Latin America relations at the US Army War College.”^[5]

The coincidence of the two reports—suspicions of a covert Russian SIGINT base in Nicaragua and the Nicaraguan government's sudden expulsion of Americans—no doubt is intriguing in itself. What the reports failed to make clear, however, is that the sale of Russian tanks to Nicaragua was discussed openly for some time. So what is happening?

GLONASS: Russia's GPS

At the root of American suspicions of SIGINT activities in Nicaragua is Russia's Global Navigation Satellite System. Commonly known as GLONASS—the transliterated acronym of *Global'naya navigatsionnaya sputnikovaya sistema*—it is operated by Russia's Aerospace Defense Forces or “VKO” (*Voyska Vozdushno-Kosmicheskoy Oborony*), which resides within the Defense Ministry. GLONASS is analogous to the United States' Global Positioning System or “GPS,” the satellite-based navigation system operated by the United States Defense Department.

GLONASS is a legacy of the Soviet period. Its first operational satellites went into service in December 1983. GLONASS survived

the Soviet Union's dissolution to reach full operational status in December 1995, with 24 satellites in three different orbital planes. By 2002, however, only eight remained in operation, as satellites were failing in orbit and Russia was unable to launch new ones. A May 2007 Presidential Decree granted free unrestricted international access to GLONASS, which in February 2009 was declared the legal property of the Russian Federation.

Despite a 2004 promise to have eighteen operational satellites by 2007 (the minimum number needed)—and another one in December 2009, when Russian space agency's (ROSCOSMOS) Anatoly Perminov promised then-Prime Minister Putin a full (24) operational satellite constellation in 2010—GLONASS did not regain full operational capability until December 2011. In May 2016, Russian Defense Minister Dmitry Rogozin announced that the Collective Security Treaty Organization—a regional mutual defense alliance comprised of Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—would henceforth use GLONASS.[6] In December 2015, the Russian Space Systems Association [7] certified GLONASS on behalf of the Russian Defense Ministry.

Defense Minister Rogozin—speaking after a December 2014 meeting in Havana with Raul Castro, who chairs Cuba's State Council and the Council of Ministers—called a recently enacted United States law barring GLONASS monitoring stations on American territory “unconstructive and shameless,”[8] referring to a provision in the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). [9] In May 2012, Russia asked for approval to locate GLONASS signal quality monitoring sites in the United States, one of 30 countries approached at the time to host monitoring stations.[10] Russia threatened to respond in kind to the 2014 NDAA prohibition—there were GPS stations in Russia at the time—but settled in the end for implementing a delayed relay between GPS stations and satellites, ostensibly eroding the military and intelligence value of GPS positioning data.[11] While GPS remains operational inside Russia today, Russia acted on Mr. Rogozin's promise to place monitoring stations “in other countries.” GLONASS, he predicted, “may soon outstrip the American GPS”:

“They've lost what they had on Russian territory, and they'll get a network of GLONASS navigation systems surrounding the United States, so it won't be GPS breathing down our necks but instead we'll be breathing down the neck of GPS.”[12]

GLONASS Comes to Latin America

The accuracy of GLONASS—just like the American GPS and any other Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) including the European Union's *Galileo* and China's *Beidou*—depends upon a network of reference stations located around the globe to detect and correct any changes in satellite orbits. GLONASS monitoring stations are operated by ROSCOSMOS, which in February 2013 established its first site in Latin America, located at the University of Brasilia Centre for Technological Development. In July 2014, ROSCOSMOS entered into an agreement with the Agência Espacial Brasileira to open two more monitoring stations, one at the Federal University of Santa Maria in Rio Grande do Sul; and the other at the Federal University of Pernambuco's Technological Institute in Recife.[13]

That same month, Russia's ambassador to Nicaragua, Nikolay Vladimir, confirmed reports that the two countries had agreed to build a GLONASS monitoring site in the Managua area “within two years.”[14] It would join the 19 monitoring stations inside Russia, plus the one in operation in Brazil and three others in Antarctica. In August 2015, the Instituto Nicaragüense de Telecomunicaciones y Correos (“Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications & Mail” aka TELCOR) signed an agreement authorizing construction of the GLONASS monitoring site. The Nicaraguan National Assembly had already authorized the project in April. Nicaragua gained access to GLONASS' full constellation of 24 satellites (plus four reserves).[15] One published report stated that “the satellites will be handled by Russian specialists around the clock, while a team of Nicaraguans is trained to use them.”[16]

A year earlier in August 2014, the Russian government announced a “framework agreement” with Cuba to collaborate in “the peaceful uses of space.” It included an agreement in principle to build a GLONASS monitoring station on the island, something that had been discussed since at least 2010.[17] One report suggested cryptically that the two sides needed additional time to reconcile what it called “different regulations” over “information exchanges” before the agreement could come into force.[18]

The discussion reconvened in Moscow in April 2015[19] and again in late October 2015, when now Deputy Prime Minister Rogozin reiterated, “We are planning to discuss with our Cuban friends the construction of a GLONASS monitoring station on Cuban territory.”[20] The Russian government's official October 2015 announcement of a final agreement declared, “Russia is returning to Cuba.”[21]

Is Russian SIGINT Returning to Cuba?

Russia undoubtedly is engaged in intelligence-gathering activities in the Caribbean and Central America including SIGINT. As Diana Villiers Negroponete of the Woodrow Wilson International Center noted:

“The day before the U.S. delegation was due to start normalization talks in Havana, a Russian warship docked in Havana. The Meridian-class intelligence ship with a crew of approximately 200 had visited Havana in February and March 2014.”[22]

While the Russian government steadfastly denied it—speaking in Brasilia on 17 July 2014, President Putin said “Russia is capable of solving problems related to its defense capabilities without this element [Lourdes]”[23]—the Russian daily *Kommersant* reported the previous day that the Russian and Cuban governments had agreed in principle to reopen the Soviet-era Lourdes signal intelligence station located south of Havana that Russia shuttered in 2001.[24] Mr. Putin is said to have agreed to write off some USD 32 billion in debt owed the Russian government by Cuba, amounting to some 90 percent of the Cuban government’s total indebtedness to Russia.



Russian SIGINT Site at Lourdes, Cuba (Source: Lenta.ru)[25]

The Soviet Union began building its Lourdes SIGINT site in July 1962 and it became fully operational in 1967. Lourdes went on to become the locus of perhaps the most significant intelligence collection effort directed at the United States during the Cold War. It was jointly operated by Russian military intelligence[26] and the Federal Agency for Government Communications,[27] and Cuba’s main intelligence directorate, respectively.[28] Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service, the SVR (*Sluzhba vneshney razvedki*), also operated a communications center there, which it used to communicate with agent networks in North and South America. According to *Kommersant*, the Russian government contemplated using a re-opened Lourdes facility to communicate with Russian naval surface and subsurface vessels. It quoted former SVR director and current Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov:

“Lourdes gave the Soviet Union the ability to see the entire western hemisphere. From this perspective its loss impacted our knowledge of what was happening in the region. For a Russia that today must defend its legitimate rights and place in the world, it [the Lourdes SIGINT site] is no less valuable than it was to the USSR.”[29]

A year later, however, some Russian officials publicly questioned the Lourdes site’s usefulness. On the one hand, Sergey Naryshkin[30] welcomed the Cuban government’s interest in the Russia-led defense alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, regarding which Mr. Naryshkin’s deputy in the State Duma, Vasily Likhachyov, said, “Today, it seems to me, this political offer takes on a geopolitical character in the interest of strengthening Cuban national security.”[31] At the same time, however, Andrei Klimov, who was deputy head of the Federation Council’s International Affairs Committee, had this to say:

“Military-technical and military-political cooperation with Cuba is a possibility. I can confirm this as the man who negotiated with them. But to enter the same river twice seems to me unproductive. The world is changing and realigning, so I don’t think we need to go back to Cuba like it’s the 1980s. If we’re talking about having a military and technical presence, our current methods allow us to achieve the same end through different means—it’s more efficient than having a SIGINT center there”[32]

Ten months later, the Interfax news agency asked the Foreign Ministry’s Latin American Department director, Aleksandr Shchetinin, “Are there plans to reopen the Lourdes radar center in suburban Havana that was abandoned in 2002?” He responded, “The Lourdes base was closed, and we don’t anticipate any steps to reopen it.”[33] The Interfax interviewer then queried, “Earlier, Sergei Lavrov and other Russian officials have stated that Russia could establish logistics bases in various parts of the world. Are there any

plans to establish such bases in Latin America?" Mr. Shchetinin gave this carefully worded answer:

"The question of establishing logistics sites for the Russian Navy—it's a matter for negotiation, something that's entirely normal, low-key, reasonable. It's related to the need for port calls to refuel, to rest crews, to replenish food supplies, and so on. When it's deemed appropriate to discuss these needs, conversations take place with individual Latin American countries."[34]

Russian Dreams of a Caribbean Footprint

Past statements by Russian government officials and other indicators give some basis to think that the agreement to permit a GLONASS site in Nicaragua may also allow Russian naval vessels to use Nicaraguan port facilities. Contemporary reports of Russian ambitions in Nicaragua if true are nothing new. Asked in 1984, 'What do you see as the greatest security threat in Central America?' United States Ambassador Deane R. Hinton[35] replied:

'The greatest security threat is the possibility that in a state such as Nicaragua with Soviet and Cuban ties, you're going to end up with Soviet submarine bases.'[36]

The Latin American proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union came full force to Nicaragua when the Sandinista regime assumed power in 1979. The country can claim the dubious distinction, in one assessment, "as one of the hottest battlegrounds of the Cold War." [37]

Starting in the early 1980s, the Soviet Union began exploring a permanent naval and naval air presence in Nicaragua. With its Cuban partner, the Soviet Union constructed a military airbase at Punta Huerte, Nicaragua,[38] in partial exchange for granting Soviet naval reconnaissance aircraft refueling and overflight rights. The Soviet objective was to conduct air reconnaissance missions along the coast of the western United States similar to existing Soviet air reconnaissance along the eastern United States.[39] The Soviets had the option to base reconnaissance aircraft at Punta Huerte, or to have Soviet aircraft based at San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba, overfly Nicaraguan airspace to the Pacific.

Some American intelligence analysts believed that the Soviets intended to establish a military "center of gravity" [40] in the Caribbean Basin, using Nicaragua to augment Soviet bases in Cuba. The 1984 Kissinger Report concluded that Cuba was "a hemispheric base for Soviet nuclear-capable aircraft and submarines." [41] The Soviet Union could quickly exercise its Nicaraguan option by obtaining access to sites there and upgrading them as required, reserving the option of a purpose-built infrastructure for later.

Indeed, overflight rights in Nicaraguan airspace allowed Soviet naval air assets to conduct reconnaissance missions up and down the United States' western coastline. Intelligence analysts cautioned that American national security interests would be severely jeopardized should the Soviets gain "access to Nicaraguan facilities," since this would mean that they "for the first time...[have] the option of establishing a permanent air and naval presence in the eastern Pacific and along the U.S. west coast." [42] While these analysts qualified that "Soviet naval access is currently limited by harbor depth and inadequate facilities," in Nicaragua, "this will change," they warned, "within the next three to five years with the completion of the port development program." [43] In the end it was the Soviet Union's collapse that brought the effort to an abrupt end.

While advising that "there are no known submarine facilities existing or under construction in Nicaragua," [44] American intelligence analysts identified two Nicaraguan seaports—the Caribbean port of El Bluff and the Pacific port of Corinto—as sufficiently developed to allow Soviet blue water naval forces on a limited basis, subject to further modification and deepening. Specific to Soviet submarines already known to operate in the Caribbean, dredging Nicaragua's "El Bluff facility...[to] an eventual depth of 20 meters... would provide access to virtually any ship in the Soviet fleet, including nuclear submarines..." [45]. Of greater immediate concern was the belief that:

"As an intermediate measure, or to avoid the costs of constructing a permanent base, the Soviet Navy could move to establish a protected anchorage in Nicaraguan territorial waters, an option which they have employed frequently in the past when shore-based facilities have not been available. This alternative would allow the Soviets to sidestep the problem of harbor depth. In the parlance of the Soviet fleet, such an anchorage is known as a "floating rear," and might feature a repair ship, a destroyer or submarine tender, a barracks ship, a supply barge, and even a floating dry dock."

"Floating bases of this type...[have] provided the Soviets with an expedient means of sustaining a naval presence in areas where they might not otherwise have access to the necessary logistical support. Such a facility could be established relatively quickly and might be expected to generate less political fallout than the establishment of a more permanent naval presence ashore." [46]

Since the Soviet Navy had used floating rear-type configurations in several Cuba harbors, this concern was well founded.

To “the possibility that Moscow might attempt to use Nicaragua...as an expedient base for cruise-missile submarines (SSGNs) or even Yankee-class SSBNs,” there were “at least two cases which might serve as a precedent for such an action,” one of which was “the Soviet attempt to build a nuclear submarine base at Cienfuegos, Cuba, during the early 1970s.”^[47] Regarding the Cienfuegos “precedent”:

“There is an important difference between the cases of Cuba and Nicaragua. The 1962 accords prohibiting the placement of offensive weapons in Cuba, though invoked at the time of the Cienfuegos incident, would not apply to the deployment of Soviet nuclear-capable forces in Nicaragua.”^[48]

Nonetheless, American intelligence analysts believed that the Soviet Union would approach “any move in this direction cautiously”:

“It is unlikely that Moscow would risk provoking a potentially dangerous incident over this issue— perhaps leading to a replay of the Cuban missile crisis—by attempting to present the United States with an obvious challenge.”

“The promise of Soviet caution seems to be borne out by their behavior during the Cienfuegos incident, where Soviet probing to determine the limits of the 1962 accord was carried out in a responsible, if carefully orchestrated manner. The Soviets tested the limits of U.S. tolerance by sending, in sequence, a conventional attack boat, nuclear-powered cruise-missile submarine, and a diesel-powered ballistic-missile submarine into the Cuban ports of Cienfuegos, Antilla, and Havana. In all, some seven nuclear-capable Soviet submarines visited Cuban ports.”^[49]

While as of February 1989 there were “no known submarine facilities existing or under construction in Nicaragua,”^[50] the Pacific seaport of Corinto “could accommodate limited numbers of Soviet missile or attack submarines, together with submarine support ships.” Regarding the principal port facilities “on the Atlantic/Caribbean side of Nicaragua,” the conclusion regarding El Bluff was “probably not submarines”; and Rama, “not submarines.”^[51] However, “Soviet reconnaissance planes flying out of Punta Huerte”—an airfield constructed in 1982 “with Cuban assistance”—“would be able to fly missions along the U.S. Pacific Coast just as they now reconnoitre the U.S. Atlantic coast from Cuba.”^[52]

Fast forward to August 2014, when Nicaraguan Army commander (General de Ejército) General Julio César Avilés [Castillo] announced that Nicaragua was acquiring “new naval and air assets” from Russia to patrol Nicaraguan maritime territory in the Caribbean.^[53] The Nicaraguan navy and the Russian FSKN have conducted joint interdiction operations in the Caribbean since 2014.^[54] During a February 2016 ceremony in which outgoing Russian Ambassador Nikolay Vladimir was awarded the Order José de Marcoleta by President Daniel Ortega, Mr. Vladimir disclosed that Russia was helping to “modernize” Nicaraguan military and national police “defensive” and “transport” aircraft as well as facilities at the Augusto C. Sandino airport.^[55]

Is Nicaragua’s GLONASS Site a Covert Russian SIGINT Base?

Sergey Aksyonov writes in a recent commentary published in *Russkaya Planeta*:

“The first alarm bells sounded for the United States in February 2014, when [Russian Defense Minister Sergei] Shogu delivered a bombshell about Russia’s global military plans during a visit to Nicaragua. ‘In addition to Vietnam and Cuba, we plan to increase the number of military bases in countries such as Venezuela, Nicaragua, Seychelles, Singapore, and others.’ He explained why. ‘We maintain active air patrols. But to do so, we need refueling bases. [...] Obviously, it makes sense to take advantage of geography when deciding where to locate a military base. In the case of Nicaragua, it’s its proximity to the United States.’^[56]

When the recent reports appeared alleging that Russia was building a SIGINT base in Nicaragua under the guise of a GLONASS monitoring station, a Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson quickly dismissed it, saying, “it’s difficult to comment on a science fiction fantasy.”^[57] This, Mr. Aksyonov writes, was the exact right response:

“It’s necessary in this situation for Russia to buy time. Time to put the reconnaissance center into operation and to implement a security plan. It seems the responsible authorities are already doing this. American media revelations provoked an immediate response from the Russian Foreign Minister, which is a ‘cover’ story. ‘The Russian Federation in fact is cooperating on GLONASS with a number of Latin American countries, on the basis of absolutely open and transparent agreements,’ he declared. That’s right, every agency of the Russian government must do its job—the military its job, the diplomats their job.”^[58]

The online Russian newspaper [Vzglyad](#) writes that the American media report:

"[G]ives no information on the intelligence center's location in Nicaragua or when it was finished [but] only that the site is disguised as a navigation satellite tracking station of the Russian GLONASS system, which is about to finish construction...It is worth pointing out that the Russian GPS site in Nicaragua was opened by Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu on 23 February 2015. It is that site, apparently, which the U.S. media had in mind."[\[59\]](#)

It quotes Boris Martynov, who is Deputy Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Latin American Studies, who said he is inclined to see the report as baseless speculation, stating Russia had "nothing left in Latin America" after closing its the Soviet-era intelligence center in Lourdes, Cuban in 2000.

"Moreover, there's an effort now to bring up again old information about Russia The United States woke and realized it was losing its grip on Latin America. So in this sense it's not surprising. It's just an effort to sway opinion."[\[60\]](#)

In April, the FSLN[\[61\]](#) leader in Nicaragua's National Assembly, Edwin Castro, announced that the Nicaraguan government had agreed to purchase 50 surplus Russian T-72B1 tanks[\[62\]](#) at a stated cost of USD 80 million. The tanks "will be used by the Nicaraguan Army in the fight against drug trafficking."[\[63\]](#) The first twenty tanks completed their refurbishment in late April 2016. [\[64\]](#) "Russian support has been resolute and selfless, and it has attached great importance to Nicaragua because it understands the problem with drug trafficking" and how "drugs end up to Europe and Asia," said Mr. Ortega, while suggesting that Russia's cooperation has been "extraordinary" in recent years.[\[65\]](#)

Mr. Aksyonov speculates about a connection between the tank purchase and the GLONASS site:

"The size of Nicaragua's purchase demonstrates the equipment's significance to Managua. The amount it paid Russia—9 million dollars—exceeds the country's annual defense budget. It is ironic that some experts wonder whether such an old-fashioned approach to defense as building up the armored component of the Nicaraguan Army is inappropriate. If the United States decides to 'close' the Russian tracking center, it will act through a foreign proxy. One of Nicaragua's neighbors, for example. Everyone knows that traditionally, Central American countries are heavily influenced by Washington, and that present-day Panama's territory was taken from Columbia by armed force just for the sake of building a ship canal. So organizing such an attack [on the Nicaraguan GLONASS site] would not be difficult. Maybe this scenario is unfolding already. In connection with Nicaragua's tank purchase, Costa Rica has already expressed interest in escalating the arms race."[\[66\]](#)

What Does the Future Hold?

Regional reaction so far has been sharply critical. Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solis called the tank purchase "inappropriate and unjustified," with Foreign Affairs Minister Manuel Gonzalez adding that it raises the specter "of a regional arms race"[\[67\]](#) in Central America. Speaking in Managua, Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes added, "No tanks were needed in Nicaragua." President Ortega in early May clamped down on further discussion of Russian tanks, ordering Nicaraguan government officials not to speak about it. "Only the President and the Army of Nicaragua are empowered to address issues of national security," Mr. Ortega declared.[\[68\]](#)

So, does Russia intend to use the Nicaraguan GLONASS site for SIGINT? That question cannot be answered definitively on the basis of the open-source information available today. Several aspects of what is known invite speculation—the on again, off again reopening of the Soviet-era Lourdes SIGINT site, located just 155 miles from the United States; Russian technicians operating the GLONASS site in Nicaragua; and renewed Russian interest in establishing a Caribbean basin naval presence, to mention just three. Each is interesting; none of course is probative. So, too, is Russia's direct support for the Nicaraguan government's counter-trafficking operations, and China's role in the construction of a new trans-isthmus canal in Nicaragua.[\[69\]](#)

For some final conjecture, we return to Mr. Aksyonov's *Russkaya Planeta* commentary:

"Here's what Russia needs to have a full-fledged military presence in the region. The main opponent of constructing a new ship canal [across Nicaragua] is the United States. After all, the Panama Canal has been under its de facto control for a century. Panama tried five times to regain control of the canal, but to no avail. The last time, Washington accused its leader, Manuel Noriega, of drug trafficking, and took him out of the country with a bag on his head and threw him into an American prison. So Russia should be fully prepared to challenge United States hegemony in Latin America. The number one priority is to know everything that's going on in the region. For this, it needs a signals

The translation of all source material is by the author unless noted otherwise.

[1] Signals intelligence (SIGINT) is traditionally considered to be one of the most important and sensitive forms of intelligence. One of the better definitions comes from the United States Air Force Intelligence Targeting Guide [Air Force Pamphlet 14-210. Intelligence. 1 February 1998]: “SIGINT is a category of intelligence comprising, either individually or in combination, all communications intelligence (COMINT), electronics intelligence (ELINT), and foreign instrumentation signals intelligence, however transmitted. It is derived from foreign communications and electronics signals in two principal categories: COMINT, which is derived from the intercept of foreign communications; and ELINT, which is derived from the analysis of foreign noncommunications and electromagnetic radiation emitted from other than nuclear detonations or radio-active sources.” The United States Army Field Manual FM 2-0 [17 May 2004] adds a third SIGINT category called FISINT, or “Technical information and intelligence derived from the intercept of foreign electromagnetic emissions associated with the testing and operational deployment of non-US aerospace, surface, and subsurface systems. Foreign instrumentation signals include but are not limited to telemetry, beaconry, electronic interrogators, and video data links.” By one assessment at least, “Russia continues to maintain one of the most sophisticated SIGINT programs in the world.” [Interagency OPSEC Support Staff (1996). *Intelligence Threat Handbook* rev. May 1996. UNCLASSIFIED (Washington, D.C.: Interagency OPSEC Staff) 3-1.

[2] See: “Is Moscow preparing for new Cold War? Russia agrees to build spy base in Nicaragua and prepares to deploy missiles on Polish border.” *The Daily Mail* [published online 23 June 2016].

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3656494/Is-Moscow-preparing-new-Cold-War-Russia-agrees-build-spy-base-Nicaragua-prepares-deploy-missiles-Polish-border.html>. Last accessed 25 June 2016. See also: “Moscow Building Spy Site in Nicaragua.” *Washington Free Beacon* [published online 23 June 2016]. <http://freebeacon.com/national-security/moscow-building-spy-site-nicaragua/>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[3] “Nicaragua explica a EE.UU. caso de los funcionarios expulsados.” *El Nuevo Diario* [published online in Spanish 16 June 2016]. <http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/nacionales/395534-nicaragua-explica-ee-uu-caso-funcionarios-expulsad/> Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[4] “Expulsa Nicaragua a 3 funcionarios de EE.UU. y crece tensión.” *Telesurtv.net* [published online in Spanish 17 June 2016]. <http://www.telesurtv.net/news/Expulsa-Nicaragua-a-3-funcionarios-de-EE.UU.-y-crece-tension-20160617-0003.html>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[5] A faculty roster posted on the United States Army War College Strategic Studies Institute website reads, “Dr. R. Evan Ellis is a research professor of Latin American Studies at the Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, with a research focus on the region’s relationships with China and other non-Western Hemisphere actors.” GLONASS like all Global Navigation Satellite Systems <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/people.cfm?authorID=580>. Last accessed 24 June 2016.

[6] “Rogozin: ODKB budet ispol’zovat’ vozmozhnosti GLONASS i sozdast SP po remontu tekhniki.” *TASS* [published online in Russian 20 May 2016]. <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/3299393>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[7] The Russian Space Systems Association was formerly part of the United Rocket and Space Corporation Russian transl.: *Ob’yedinennaya raketno-kosmicheskaya korporatsiya*), a government-owned corporation formed in August 2013. The United Rocket and Space Corporation was merged into the Federal Space Agency in December 2015 to form the ROSCOSMOS State Corporation for Space Activities *aka* “ROCOSMOS”.

[8] Rogozin: GLONASS skoro mozhet operedit’ GPS.” *TASS* [published online in Russian 20 December 2014]. <http://tass.ru/kosmos/1662068>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[9] Section 1602(b) of the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act prohibits the President from authorizing or permitting “the construction of a global navigation satellite system ground monitoring station directly or indirectly controlled by a foreign government” on United States territory unless the Secretary of Defense and the Director of National Intelligence, respectively, “jointly certify” to Congress that any such ground station “will not possess the capability or potential to be for the purpose of gathering intelligence in the United States or improving any foreign weapon system.” They may jointly grant a waiver to that requirement if certain conditions are met. See: <https://www.congress.gov/113/plaws/publ66/PLAW-113publ66.pdf>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[10] “Russians Consider IGS as Congress Moves to Limit GLONASS, Foreign GNSS Monitoring Stations on U.S. Soil.” *Inside GNSS* [published online in Russian 16 December 2013]. <http://www.insidegnss.com/node/3830>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[11] Gary Bearden (2015). “Washington Should Reconsider Russian Satellite Navigation” *Real Clear Defense* [published online 30 September 2015]. http://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2015/09/30/washington_should_reconsider_russian_satellite_navigation_108525.html. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[12] "TASS [20 December 2014], *op cit.*

[13] "Russia Installs Glonass Satellite Station in Brazil." *Satellite Today* [published online 17 July 2014]. <http://www.satellitetoday.com/regional/2014/07/17/russia-installs-glonass-satellite-station-in-brazil/>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[14] "Glonass funcionará en dos años en Nicaragua." *El Nuevo Diario* [published online in Spanish 18 July 2014]. <http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/politica/325066-glonass-funcionara-dos-anos-nicaragua/>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[15] "Nicaragua y Rusia firman implementación de Glonass

Plazo." *El Nuevo Diario* [published online in Spanish 20 August 2015]. <http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/politica/368042-nicaragua-rusia-firman-implementacion-glonass/>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] "Na Kube predlozhili postroit' stantsii GLONASS." *Lenta.ru* [published online in Russian 18 June 2014]. <https://lenta.ru/news/2014/06/18/glonass/>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[18] "Rusia instalará en Cuba una estación de 'corrección y monitoreo' de satélites." *Diario de Cuba* [published online in Spanish 13 May 2014]. http://www.diariodecuba.com/cuba/1399996235_8560.html. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[19] "Kuba i Rossiya segodnya obsudyat vopros razmeshcheniya nazemnoy stantsii GLONASS." *Vestnik GLONASS* [published online in Russian 23 April 2015]. http://vestnik-glonass.ru/news/vo_vlasti/kuba-i-rossiya-segodnya-obsudyat-vopros-razmeshcheniya-nazemnoy-stantsii-glonass/. Last accessed 25 June 2016. Another report gave details of a 5-year agreement under which Russia and Cuba "will discuss the construction of ground stations on the island." See: "Cuba-Russia Agree on 5-Year Plan." *Havana Times* [published online 26 April 2015]. <http://www.havanatimes.org/?p=110867>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[20] "Rogozin: Rossiya planiruyet sozdat' tsentry kalibrovki signala GLONASS na Kube." TASS [published online in Russian 22 October 2015]. <http://tass.ru/politika/2370648>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[21] <https://rg.ru/2015/10/22/kuba-site-anons.html>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[22] "Russian Engagement in the Western Hemisphere." Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, 22 October 2015 by Diana Villiers Negroponete, JD, Ph.D., Public Policy Scholars, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA07/20151022/104073/HHRG-114-FA07-Wstate-NegroponeteD-20151022.pdf>. Last accessed 27 June 2016.

[23] "Putin oproverg informatsiyu o razmeshchenii rossiyskogo radara v kubinskom Lurdese." TASS [published online in Russian 17 July 2014]. <http://tass.ru/politika/1322847>. Last accessed 26 June 2016.

[24] "Imeyushchiy ushi da vnov' uslyshit: Rossiya vozvrashchayet na Kubu svoy tsentr radioperekhvata." *Kommersdant* [published online in Russian 16 July 2014]. <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2525998>. Last accessed 26 June 2016.

[25] "MID oproverg soobshcheniya o vosstanovlenii tsentra elektronnoy razvedki na Kube." *Lenta.ru* [published online in Russian 25 March 2016]. <https://lenta.ru/news/2016/03/25/lurdes/>. Last accessed 28 June 2016.

[26] More commonly known as the "GRU" for its transliterated Russian acronym (*Glavnoye razvedyvatel'noye upravleniye*), it was the main foreign military intelligence main agency of the Soviet Army General Staff; and in the post-Soviet period, the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff.

[27] More commonly known as "FAPSI" for its transliterated Russian acronym (*Federal'noye Agentstvo Pravitel'svennoy Svyazi i Informatsii*), it was the Soviet-era equivalent of the United States National Security Agency. FAPSI was part of the KGB, the main Soviet era security agency (*Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti*), and was responsible for signal intelligence and the security of governmental communications. FAPSI was abolished by presidential decree in March 2003 and its functions were divided between the Federal Security Service (*aka* "FSB" for *Federal'naya sluzhba bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii*) and the Defense Ministry. The name if its FSB component is the Special Communications and Information Service (*Sluzhba spetsial'noy svyazi i informatsii, Spetssvyaz' Rossii*) also known as the *Spetssvyaz*.

[28] The Cuban government's main state intelligence agency is the Dirección de Inteligencia (*aka* "DI" or "G2") or Intelligence Directorate. It was established under the Cuban Interior Ministry in late 1961 and until 1989 was known as the Dirección General de Inteligencia ("DGI") or General Intelligence Directorate.

[29] *Kommersdant* (16 July 2014), *op cit.*

[30] Mr. Naryshkin chairs the State Duma and the Collective Security Treaty Organization's Parliamentary Assembly. The State Duma—its full name is the "State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation" (*Predsedatel' Gosudarstvennoy Dumy Federal'nogo sobraniya Rossiyskoy Federatsii*)—is the lower house of the Federal Assembly of Russia (*Federalnoye Sobraniye*), the upper house of which is the Federation Council (*Sovét Federatsii*).

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a regional mutual defense alliance, the members of which are Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. It was formed in 2002 after several former Soviet republics rejected the May 1992 Treaty on Collective Security ("Tashkent Treaty"), a Russian initiative intended to provide a regional security structure within the CIS. At the time, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov spoke of the CSTO as a potential Eurasian partner for NATO.

[31] "Rossiya mozhnet vozrodit' voyennuyu bazu na Kube." *Izvestia* [published online in Russian 8 May 2015]. <http://izvestia.ru/news/586277>. Last accessed 28 June 2016.

[32] *Ibid.* Mr. Klimov agreed that it made sense to cooperate with the Cuban government to allow Russian naval vessels to be serviced there.

[33] "Aleksandr Shchetinin: Dopingovyy skandal ne meshayet podgotovke k priyemu rossiyskikh sportsmenov v Rio-de-Zhaneiro." *Interfax.ru* [published online in Russian 25 March 2016]. <http://www.interfax.ru/interview/500355>. Last accessed 28 June 2016.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] Hinton was a career Foreign Service officer who served in Guatemala (1954-1969), and later as U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador (1981-1983), Costa Rica (1987-1990), and Panama (1990-1994).

[36] Dean R. Hinton 1984). "Democracy Under Fire: An Interview with Ambassador Deane R. Hinton." *The Fletcher Forum*. 8:1, 1.

[37] Jussi M. Hanhimäki & Odd Arne Westad (2003). *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*. (London: Oxford University Press) 379.

[38] CAPT Steven N. Bishop, USAF (1986). *A Historical Study of the Effectiveness of U.S. Security Assistance to Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua*. (Wright-Patterson AFB: USAF Institute of Technology) 91.

[39] Gordon McCormick, Edward Gonzalez, Brian Jenkins & David Ronfeldt (1988). *Nicaraguan Security Policy: Trends and Projections*. AD-A213-820 Report R-3532-PQ&E. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND) 51. <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a213820.pdf>. Last accessed 25 September 2013.

[40] *Ibid.*, viii. This report was prepared by RAND's *Trends in the Caribbean Basin* project at the request of the US Secretary of Defense to "forecast what developments might occur in the second decade of the Sandinista revolution (1989-1999) that could affect U.S. security planning." *Ibid.*, iii.

[41] Interestingly, the 1984 Kissinger Report refers to "the submarine base in Cienfuegos," Cuba, as an established fact. The "hemispheric base" was a theme of Dr. Kissinger's for at least a decade and a half: he referred in a 22 February 1971 telephone conversation about the deployment of Soviet ballistic missile submarines "into or from Cuba' to 'the business of the hemisphere." See: United States National Security Council (1971). "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, 22 February 1971. U.A. Johnson/Kissinger (secure phone)." <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com.libproxy.kcl.ac.uk/quick/displayMultiItemImages.do?Multi=yes&queryType=quick&QueryName=cat&&ResultsID=140C6292CC2&QueryName=cat&ItemNumber=15&ItemID=CKA04970>. Last accessed 27 September 2013.

[42] McCormick, et al. (1988), *op cit.*, vii.

[43] *Ibid.*, ix.

[44] United States Department of Defense (1989). "Soviet Bloc Military Equipment Supplied to Nicaragua (Jul 1979-Dec 1988)," 3. Non-classified report c. February 1989. <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com.libproxy.kcl.ac.uk/quick/displayMultiItemImages.do?Multi=yes&queryType=quick&QueryName=cat&&ResultsID=140BC2AE369&QueryName=cat&ItemNumber=1&ItemID=CNI03145>. Last accessed 25 September 2013.

[45] McCormick, et al. (1988), *op cit.*,. 54.

[46] *Ibid.*, 55.

[47] *Ibid.*, 56.

[48] *Ibid.*, 56.

[49] *Ibid.*, 56.

[50] United States Defense Department (1989). *op cit.*, 3.

[51] *Ibid.*, 4.

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] “Ejército de Nicaragua gestiona con Rusia armamento para vigilar los espacios marítimos.” *El Espectador* [published online in Spanish 15 August 2014]. <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/elmundo/ejercito-de-nicaragua-gestiona-rusia-armamento-vigilar-articulo-510939>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[54] “Ejército de Nicaragua condecora al jefe antidroga de Rusia por su cooperación.” *Terra* [published online in Spanish 11 September 2014]. <http://noticias.terra.com.mx/mundo/latinoamerica/ejercito-de-nicaragua-condecora-al-jefe-antidroga-de-rusia-por-su-cooperacion,8fea9c21b6768410VgnCLD200000b2bf46d0RCRD.html>. Last accessed 25 June 2016. Russia’s Federal Drug Control Service is known by its transliterated Russian acronym, FSKN (*Federal’naya sluzhba Rossiyskoy Federatsii po kontrolyu za oborotom narkotikov*).

[55] “Embajador de Rusia: Gobierno de Nicaragua adquirió aeronaves rusas.” *La Prensa* [published online in Spanish 9 February 2016]. <http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2016/02/09/nacionales/1983254-embajador-de-rusia-gobierno-de-nicaragua-adquirio-aeronaves-rusas>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[56] “SSHA ispugalis’ rossiyskogo razvedtsentra v Nikaragua.” *Russkaya Planeta* [published online in Russian 24 June 2016]. <http://rusplt.ru/society/nikaragua-rossiya-sbor-dannyih-26675.html>. Last accessed 28 June 2016.

[57] “Rossiyskiy razvedtsentr v Nikaragua vstrevozhil Pentagon.” *Vzglyad* [published online in Russian 23 June 2016]. <http://vz.ru/world/2016/6/23/817635.html>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[58] *Russkaya Planeta* [24 June 2016], *op cit*.

[59] *Vzglyad* [23 June 2016], *op cit*.

[60] *Ibid*

[61] FSLN in the acronym of Nicaragua’s governing political party *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*, the members of which are commonly referred to as *Sandinistas*.

[62] According to open source reports, the fifty T-72B1 main battle tanks purchased by the *Fuerzas Armadas de Nicaragua Nicaraguan* (“Nicaraguan Armed Forces”) are surplus vehicles that recently underwent maintenance and armament upgrades at the 61st Armor Repair Facility in Strelna. The T-72B1 is nicknamed “the White Eagle” for its stock color (photo source: <http://www.tehnoosk.ru/node/2053>).



[63] “Tanques rusos “contra narcos” en Nicaragua.” *La Prensa* [published online in Spanish 30 April 2016]. <http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2016/04/30/politica/2027577-tanques-rusos-contra-narcos-en-nicaragua>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[64] “Rossiya nachala postavku Nikaragua tankov T-72B1.” *Vzglyad* [published online in Russian 25 April 2016]. <http://www.vz.ru/news/2016/4/25/807327.html>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[65] “Ortega: Rusia armará al Ejército: El Presidente inconstitucional alega que hay que modernizar al ejército y justifica que ya hubo bases de EE.UU. en Nicaragua.” *La Prensa* [published online in Spanish 4 June 2014]. <http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2014/04/06/nacionales/189866-ortega-rusia-armara-al-ejercito>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[66] *Russkaya Planeta* [24 June 2016]. *op cit*.

[67] “Glava MID Kosta-Riki: Rossijskie tanki v Nikaragua—militarizaciã regiona! Politika Prezident Kosta-Riki «opečalen» postavkoj tankov iz Rossii v Nikaragu.” *Regnum* [published online in Russian 29 April 2016]. <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2126896.html>. Last accessed 25 June 2016. The article points out that as a result of a “large Nicaraguan diaspora,” than 287,000 Nicaraguans now live in Costa Rica, and that this figure may reach as high as 800,000 people if the full weight of illegal immigration is taken into account. It also referenced a December 2015 International Court of Justice decision recognizing Costa Rican sovereignty over a 2.5-square-kilometer disputed territory on its border with Nicaragua, and ordering Nicaragua to compensate Costa Rica for damage caused to

its territory. [<http://www.ticotimes.net/2015/12/16/hague-court-calero-island-belongs-costa-rica>. Last accessed 25 June 2016]

[68] “Ortega ordena callar sobre compra de 50 tanques rusos.” *La Prensa* [published online in Spanish 1 May 2016]. <http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2016/05/01/nacionales/2027898-daniel-ortega-ordena-callar-sobre-compra-de-50-tanques-rusos>. Last accessed 25 June 2016.

[69] This latter factor, while well outside the scope of this essay, may have significant bearing on the outcome of Nicaragua’s November 2016 presidential election. There is been widespread, continuous speculation that the Hong Kong Nicaragua Development Group—the company building the canal—is in financial trouble. As the aforementioned Dr. Evan Ellis of the United States Army War College wrote, this and other factors might challenge Russian reliance on the Sandinista government as the lynchpin of its strategy in the Caribbean Basin. See: “Russian Influence in Latin America.” *The Cipher Brief* [published online 5 January 2016]. <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/article/russian-influence-latin-america>. Last accessed 28 June 2016.