

Mr. Scott Armstrong  
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Dear Mr. Armstrong,

Reading your fine Mother Jones piece, which actually says vote for George Bush and elect the CIA, reminded me that I forgot to send you what I sent without any reaction at all to a number of media, print and electronic, and more Members of the Congress that I can now remember. Among other things, it is Ambassador Melton's statement that "we're here to overthrow their government." Making copies is a bit much for us because we have a simple copier and three newspapers pages are involved but I'll be glad to send them if you are interested.

Please excuse my not sending it anyway and my typing. I'm past 75, in impaired health and of limited mobility and energy. I was a reporter, investigative reporter, Senate editor and investigator and during and for a short time after World War II I was an intelligence analyst, OSS and State. I do assure you, if you do not know, that Melton's statement changes the entire situation legally and under diplomatic practice because it is an official statement, not just what is common knowledge.

Here is more or less of a summary.

The White House, not the Congress, according to both Managua embassy personnel and representatives of the State Department present at the ~~the~~ embassy the Friday before the Nandaimé fracas that caused the expulsions, has been sending small groups of Members to Nicaragua, last year alone about 50. They all see, according to the embassy press officer, "the same people, opposition businessmen, the cardinal and La Prensa." The State man emphasized that these are not Congressional delegations but are sent by the White House, not for any Congressional function. There are so many there is an acronym, "codels."

The delegation that eventful weekend included Beverly Byron, who lives in Frederick. There are only two dailies in this county. Their managing editor is Mike Powell, formerly of the Baltimore News-American. As he wrote in a letter oped piece, he has no knowledge of or experience in foreign affairs. He is quite specific that he was there only to write a story about Byron in this election year. The indications are that nobody from the press is on those codels, which are to get votes for the Reagan contra proposals. This particular delegation, and I presume this is true of all, were transported by military aircraft and the other expenses were paid by the National Forum Foundation.

When it was proposed that the delegation go to the Nandaimé demonstration, which had been given a permit and was widely advertised (including that unique demonstration of traditional news judgement, a banner heading on La Prensa's front page urging attendance), almost everybody said in one way or another what one, I think Mrs. Byron, said ~~is~~ "impossible." I mean embassy, State and her. She in fact spelled out as a consequence everything except the expulsions. But Melton said their going was just "fine" and thus on his return Powell had a long story. There is a prima facie case that Melton intended strong Nicaraguan reaction because he sent them in three clearly-marked and immediately identified embassy vehicles. Only the two women Members did not go. And those who went did make the kind of gestures the Nicaraguan's alleged represented participation only according to their later explanation, there were just signalling to each other.

I think it is obvious that this represents a massive Reagan expenditure of tax money for ~~the~~ lobbying and in effect vote buying in this election year when Contra funding is to be voted on. How else do you think that so many trips were paid for, 50 in one year, with all the other costs, like hotels and food? ...In any event, when Melton testified he had done nothing wrong and hadn't the slightest idea why he was expelled, he sure did lie. Maybe under oath, which means nothing any more. There is more, if you are interested.

Sincerely, Harold Weisberg

