

## Nicaraguan Defense Expert: Ortega Won't Disarm the Paramilitary

Por Ivan Olivares (Confidencial)  
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**Disarming them will be a challenge for the new democratic government and their international support.**



Daniel Ortega greets the Masaya Police Chief Ramon Avellan on July 13, 2018. Photo: The Presidency / Confidencial

“There’s no evidence” of the Army’s direct involvement in the repression but “their silence” isn’t to their credit, since they never condemned the massacre.

HAVANA TIMES – Disarming and demobilizing the paramilitary that participated in the killing of hundreds of people since the beginning of the April 2018 rebellion, isn’t something that Daniel Ortega will ever do, since it “would be a kind of suicide”, states Roberto Cajina, an expert in defense and national security.

With the Army on the fringe of the internal struggle and the National Police subordinated to the ruler’s interests, the regime made use of armed civilians to carry out the repression and Operation Clean-up [dismantling the barricades raised by protestors]. The repression they led cost the life of over 300 citizens and injured another 2,000 between April and July of last year.

Although the Nicaraguan laws are clear in stating that there can be no other armed bodies outside of the Army and the Police, the work of disarming that paramilitary force won't come from any of the current authorities, and possibly from none in the country.

The job of keeping this irregular armed group from evolving into a force trying to "govern from below" will be one of the great tasks for the democratic government that will eventually relieve this regime, assured Cajina during an interview on the internet news program *Esta Semana*.

None of the articles in Nicaragua's Constitution gives the army the authority to disarm the paramilitary on their own. However, both the Constitution and the Armed Forces Law establish that the armed forces can intervene in situations of serious social disorder, if the President – after meeting with his cabinet and at the request of the police – orders them to support this task.

"In addition to a contradiction and a paradox, it's absurd to imagine that Daniel Ortega would ask the army to support the police (in disarming the paramilitary in order to protect people) when it's the Police that were doing the killing" [with them], he declared.

A new mentality at the head of the Executive Branch could order the armed forces to take on this mission, without discounting the possibility of asking the United Nations to send a contingent of blue helmets to help in maintaining peace.

Cajina can even imagine the involvement of the European Union or nations such as Chile, Argentina or Spain that have "a lot of interest in the Nicaraguan crisis. One of the great challenges for the new authorities will be guaranteeing public safety, to restore in some way the confidence needed to allow the return of investment to the country," the specialist indicated.

### **The Army's interests**

"In 2012, it was said that the Army had some 100 million dollars invested in the New York Stock exchange and in US Treasury bonds. Seven years later, that quantity must be much larger. That's another of the elements that caused the Army to reflect and not involve itself directly in the massacre and genocide committed by the police and the paramilitary," Cajina felt.

Despite the good relationship that the Nicaraguan Army has maintained with the United States Southern Command, that partnership didn't stop the US executive branch from sanctioning Oscar Mojica. Mojica is a retired general, the current Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, and former executive director of the Social Military Institute, which manages the Army's investments and pension funds.

The sanction imposed on this high-ranking member of the military gives, “a hidden, indirect, message” to the rest of the regime’s inner circle: not only because the United States is warning them that they could sanction any of their collaborators, but also because Mojica is thought to be linked with Daniel Ortega’s private businesses. His sanction could hinder the development of those businesses, at the same time that it renders Mojica himself as “disposable”.

### **Suspended animation**

According to witnesses and videos made during different moments of the assassinations, soldiers in civilian clothes brandishing military grade weapons belonging to the Nicaraguan Army appeared among the ranks of the paramilitary during Operation Clean-up.

However, Cajina notes that there isn’t any objective proof that the Army was involved in the crimes against humanity. Rather, the Police and paramilitary have been signaled out as the perpetrators of these.

“No definitive proof has been seen of such Army involvement. There were two videos circulating based on the May 30 massacre, but they were evidently manipulated,” he emphasized.

Instead, Cajina points to the Directorate of Police Special Operations, which he said also has the type of armament seen in the streets and for which the Army has been implicated: Dragunov rifles, PKM machine guns, grenade launchers and a great quantity of other types of arms.

“The Army continues to maintain their position of not being directly involved in the conflict. Nevertheless, the fact of not being directly involved in the massacre... doesn’t give them a clean record”, he analyzed.

According to Cajina, the Army’s activity can be explained by their need to fulfill two strategic objectives: to survive as an institution and to preserve their multi-million-dollar interests that have been invested within the United States.

“That strategy of silence isn’t of benefit to them, because calls to dialogue have been made, but no specific condemnation of the massacre has been issued by the military authorities.” The Army finds itself “in a sort of ‘suspended animation’, and that’s a labyrinth they’ll have to find their way out of,” he warned.

The army’s lack of action in confronting these armed groups contrasts with the initiative shown by the armed forces against groups in the rural areas that had taken up arms again for political reasons. The army combatted and disarmed these groups without reporting a single irregular combatant wounded... because they all ended up dead.

Roberto Cajina, experto en Defensa "Ortega no desarmará a los paramilitares"

Watch this video [on YouTube](#).