



Flag Description: Three equal horizontal bands of blue (top), white, and blue with the national coat of arms centered in the white band; the coat of arms features a triangle encircled by the words REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA on the top and AMERICA CENTRAL on the bottom, similar to the flag of El Salvador and Honduras.



Background: The Pacific coast of Nicaragua was settled as a Spanish colony from Panama in the early 16th century. Independence from Spain was declared in 1821 and the country became an independent republic in 1838. Britain occupied the Caribbean Coast in the last half of the 19th century, but gradually ceded control of the region in subsequent decades. Violent opposition to governmental manipulation and corruption spread to all classes by 1978 and resulted in a short-lived civil war that brought the Marxist Sandinista guerrillas to power in 1979. Nicaraguan aid to leftist rebels in El Salvador caused the US to sponsor anti-Sandinista contra guerrillas through much of the 1980s. Free elections in 1990, 1996, and 2001, saw the Sandinistas defeated, but voting in 2006

announced the return of former Sandinista President Daniel Ortega Saavedra. Nicaragua's infrastructure and economy - hard hit by the earlier civil war and by Hurricane Mitch in 1998 - are slowly being rebuilt.

Geography: bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Costa Rica and Honduras. Area - total: 129,494 sq km. Area - comparative: slightly smaller than the state of New York. Land boundaries: total: 1,231 km. Border countries: Costa Rica 309 km, Honduras 922 km. Coastline: 910 km. Climate: tropical in lowlands, cooler in highlands. Terrain: extensive Caribbean Sea coastal plains rising to central interior mountains; narrow Pacific coastal plain interrupted by volcanoes. Natural resources: gold, silver, copper, tungsten, lead, zinc, timber, fish. Natural hazards: destructive earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides; extremely susceptible to hurricanes. Geography - note: largest country in Central America; contains the largest freshwater body in Central America, Lago de Nicaragua.

1960 Car, Armd, 4x4. T17E1 Staghound.



Left: Nicaraguan T17E1 in action during the 1978 Civil War. By this time the few cars remaining in service

were long past due for replacement. (Photo: Author's collection)

Remarks: Nicaragua received 60 Staghounds from the US as part of Military Aid program, but no maintenance or replacement parts were supplied (see US for vehicle details).

1970 Car, Armd, 4x4. Commando V100.

Remarks: The US delivered 20 Commandos as part of Military Assistance program (see US for vehicle details).

1980 Veh, Reconnaissance. BRDM-2.

Remarks: During the 1980s, Nicaragua received approximately 50 BRDM-2 reconnaissance

vehicles from the USSR. These vehicles were probably traded for rather than bought in cash (see Russia for vehicle details).

1980 Carr, Pers, Armd, 8x8. BTR-60.



Remarks: At least half a dozen BTR-60 vehicles were received from the USSR during the 1980s (see Russia for vehicle details).