

# Poll: Ortega leads in Nicaragua

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**MANAGUA, Nicaragua** - Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega, whose socialist government was a major antagonist of the United States in the 1980s, topped all presidential contenders in a poll released Monday.

Ortega, who led the overthrow of dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979 and fought the U.S.-backed Contra rebels as Nicaragua's president from 1985-1990, had 32 percent support in a survey by M&R Consultores published in the Nicaraguan daily newspaper La Prensa and broadcast by TV Canal 2.

He would need only 35 percent of the vote to win the presidency without a runoff if he tops the second-place finisher by at least 5 percentage points. In a tighter race, 40 percent is needed to win outright.

Second in the poll with 25 percent was former banker Eduardo Montealegre, of the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance, a faction that broke away from the ruling Constitutional Liberal Party.

About 20 percent of voters surveyed planned to vote for candidate Edmundo Jarquin, who stepped in as candidate of a breakaway Sandinista party when its initial candidate, Herty Lewites, died.

The poll of 4,020 Nicaraguans on Aug. 4-10 had a margin of error of 1.5 percentage points.

As president in the 1980s, Ortega headed a socialist government that was undermined by U.S.-backed right-wing guerrillas. He lost power in elections in 1990 and fell short in two subsequent races.

Nicaraguans will also elect their legislature on Nov. 5.