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Abrams Says Military Pressure On Nicaraguan Government Only Means Of Contadora Success

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Nov. 1 in Montevideo, Uruguay, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams told reporters at a press conference that "we are going to see more military action" in Central America." He said Nicaragua is an "aggressive country" which supports subversion in neighboring countries, and that such actions are dangerous for all of Central America. The press conference took place shortly before departure to the United States, and after a three-day meeting with US Ambassadors to Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina. Abrams claimed that the major objective in Central America is "democracy," and that military action will help in bringing about Nicaraguan cooperation. The official then pointed out that it appears as if diplomatic measures to achieve said objective is not possible because "the Sandinistas are communists." Accordingly, the Sandinistas do not wish to negotiate, nor do they desire freedom of the press and free elections. Since democratic objectives cannot be obtained as long as the Sandinistas refuse to cooperate, "pressure" is necessary. Abrams then stated that the US is pressuring the Sandinistas, something that the Contadora Group does not wish to do. Without military pressure, he added, the possibilities for Contadora success are very limited. When asked if greater military pressure in Central America meant direct participation by US troops, Abrams responded: "No, we are talking about a struggle between Nicaraguans." He admitted that Uruguayan officials disagree with Washington's advocacy of military pressure in Central America. However, Abrams claimed that while the two governments disagreed on tactics, the objective of both was the same. Abrams refused to respond to a question about whether the United States would recognize a provisional government created by the contra forces in Nicaraguan territory. He said comments on US actions in a hypothetical situation were not possible. The assistant secretary confirmed that F-5 fighter planes will soon be delivered to the Honduran air force.

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