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Nicaraguan Officials On Possibility Of Direct U.S. Invasion

by Deborah Tyroler

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In a speech to the 14th general assembly of the Inter-American Social Security Conference in Managua Nov. 27, President Daniel Ortega said the possibility of a direct US invasion against Nicaragua is very real, and may occur at any moment. He called on members of the Contadora and Support Groups to promote talks toward avoiding generalized war, and urged the presidents of Honduras and Costa Rica to reject US demands which he referred to as suicidal for the two neighboring countries. In a Nov. 27 interview with PRENSA LATINA, Nicaraguan Defense Minister Humberto Ortega said the threat of US invasion will continue as long as concrete steps toward peaceful negotiations between the two nations are not taken. The interview occurred after a rally during which Nicaraguan farmers donated 110 million cordobas to national defense in a gesture to counteract the $100 million approved by the US Congress for the contras. Since there are no "immediate prospects" for detente, said Ortega, "we are compelled to continue all possible efforts for repelling a US invasion." The minister said large-scale preparations are underway on the Nicaraguan-Costa Rican border to provoke a conflict between the two nations. He declared that intelligence reports show that such provocation would be carried out by contras in Penas Blancas. The action is part of US plans to involve Honduras and Costa Rica in Washington's escalation of the war. In related matters, Ortega reported that the Sandinista army had killed 60 contras and captured an additional 15 in clashes during the past 10 days in the central region of Boaco and Chontales departments. Deputy Coordinator of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), Commander Bayardo Arce, told reporters in Buenos Aires Nov. 27 that while Nicaraguans are not fearful, they are "concerned" about direct US military intervention. He pointed out that the concentration of US Navy vessels off the Nicaraguan Atlantic coast provides reason for concern. Arce was visiting the Argentine capital to participate in a forum of regional democratic political parties. He said defeat of the counterrevolution will force the US administration to make a fundamental decision. "Either they accept the fact that their low intensity conflict strategy has failed, and seek to negotiate with Nicaragua...or, they will advocate invasion." He added that Managua expects a "surgical operation," that is, the establishment of a beachhead and a contra provisional government receiving US recognition. Arce claimed that "It is difficult to promote peace when the US is escalating its aggression in the region." "However, we cannot discard a peaceful solution, nor do we believe that [the Contadora initiative] has lost validity." The latter, he said, would be a grave mistake by Nicaragua, Central America and the international community at large.

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