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Head Of Joint Chiefs Of Staff: U.S. Public Will Stop Supporting Contras Unless They Improve Performance

by Deborah Tyroler

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Admiral William C. Crowe, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Feb. 12 that the American people would stop supporting the Nicaraguan contras unless they performed better. On the same day Secretary of State George Shultz made another pitch for contra support, arguing that US military intervention may become inevitable if Congress withdraws contra aid. (See CAU 02/13/87 for report on Shultz's remarks at meeting of the American Bar Association.) Crowe criticized the contras' political disunity and lack of military successes and said "the American people" would not make an indefinite commitment to support them unless they saw tangible results. He called on the contras to move into Nicaragua permanently, make political progress and unify their leadership. "If the contras can bring themselves together and sort themselves out and fight, they should be supported," he said. Mark Helmke, spokesman for Republican Senator Richard G. Lugar (Ind.), said, " The contras have to show themselves as a legitimate democratic group whose goal is to force elections, not overthrow the government. That's always been the trouble with this policy." (Basic data from NEW YORK TIMES, 02/13/87)

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