

12-18-1987

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Recommended Citation

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Addendum: Postponement Of Second Round Of Talks On Nicaraguan Cease-fire

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, December 18, 1987

At an afternoon press conference Dec. 14 in Managua, President Daniel Ortega said the second round of talks with the contras on the cease-fire had been delayed by "technicalities" related to the role of a four-person advisory team from Washington, originally suggested in November by House Speaker Rep. Jim Wright (D-Tex.) to assist Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo in his mediation role. Ortega said he met Dec. 11 and on Dec. 14 in Managua with Obando to settle on the details of the team's participation. Ortega claimed the contras had rejected the team's role. The president did not mention a new date for the cease-fire discussions, saying only that they would have to be before a mid-January summit among the five Central American presidents to evaluate the progress of the regional peace accord. Ortega added that he hoped the talks could be reinitiated in time to achieve a Dec. 24-25 Christmas truce. Direct talks with the contras, said Ortega, would include only technical advisers and no officials with decision-making power. Thus, they could not be construed as direct negotiations between the contras and the government. In Washington, an aide to Wright said in a telephone interview with the Washington Post that the Nicaraguan government contacted the speaker's office last week to relay a request from the Cardinal that he would like to have assistance from the team Wright suggested. When Wright's office probed Obando's thinking during the weekend through the papal nuncio in Washington, it was told the Cardinal "welcomed our presence," but did not specifically invite it, the aide said. As a result of the ambiguousness of the request, the aide added, "we decided not to go." Both the Nicaraguan government and the contras stressed that the delay is only temporary. (Basic data from Washington Post, 12/15/87)

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